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FLORETTE,

CHILD OF THE STREET;

OR,

A PEARL BEYOND PRICE.

A Metropolitan Romance of More Truth Than Fiction.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MOTHERLESS," "WITHOUT A HEART," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"THEY MET BY CHANCE."

IN a cool and shady nook, in a pleasant grove of maples, a young man reclined upon a mossy bank reading a novel, and lazily puffing into the air the smoke from a fragrant cigar.

He was attired in a stylish-made corduroy hunting-suit, wore top-boots, a broad sombrero, and by his side lay his game-bag and shot-gun.

To the right of the pleasant retreat he had invaded ran the limpid waters of the Housatonic river, winding through a lovely valley, dotted with farm-houses, and sweeping around the base of the Lover's Leap, a romantic cliff, a mile below him, and whose Indian legend of a century ago has gone into song and story.

Upon the left, some thirty paces distant from where he lay, ran a path following the banks of the river from the town of New Milford to the homes down the valley.

Ever and anon he would raise his eyes from the page before him, and turn them upon the picturesque scene that met his gaze, with the silvery stream, crossed here and there by a covered bridge, the mountains upon one hand, the rolling hills upon the other; the home-dotted vale and the village nestling away in a quiet corner, as though to hide from the rude

coming of the locomotive which had penetrated its solitudes with its iron pathway.

As he thus turned to admire the landscape, half in shadow, half in brightness, as the sun neared its western home, the face of the young man could be distinctly seen, and every feature read by one skilled in reading human nature.

And very few would gaze upon him and not call him a very handsome man, while in his dark eyes dwelt a fascination dangerous to the woman who gazed too long into them; but to one who, while admiring his perfectly-chiseled features and splendid physique, looked for the soul beyond that face, there were visible faults of character a true heart would not possess, and which marred his beauty, for it was lacking in purity, and bore traces of reckless dissipation.

Again he lowered his book, but not to gaze upon the scenery, for voices caught his ear, and the next instant two men appeared in sight and halted near, while one remarked in tones that the young man distinctly heard:



"UNLESS YOU SWEAR, UPON YOUR HONOR AS A WOMAN, TO MARRY ME, I WILL HURL YOU INTO THE MAD WATERS BELOW."

"I'd 'a' rather tapped the house to-night, Bill, for then we could hev got away under cover o' ther dark; but I don't like this waylayin' a gal on the highway in broad daylight."

From his position the young hunter could see the two men through the foliage, while, lying upon the ground as he was, they had not observed him, and, all attention after what he had heard, he listened eagerly for the answer of the other man.

"This hain't ther highway, Dick, for it runs over yonder close under ther hills; this are a private path that the gal allus goes to town by, and nobody can see what goes on."

"And you is certain she got the money, Bill?"

"Yas, fer I seen her git it out ther express-office, and then heerd her tell the agent she was goin' to make a visit afore she went home, so I looks you up at once, and here we'll take her in."

"I hope so, for I is tired o' rusticatin' up here in Connecticut; we has been here nigh three months."

"Yas, but it's pleasanter than spendin' ten years in Sing Sing, as we'd have done, ef we hadn't lighted out arter our last lift, which scared that old woman to death, and perhaps would have had us tried for murder."

"It were a bad business, pard; but the money this gal has got will take us back to the city: we'll go in disguise and look around for another job. How much did you say she had?"

"I seen either a three or a eight, and two ciphers on the back, I couldn't tell adzactly which, but I guesses it's three hundred she's got, as when I was chinnin' the ole woman at her cottage t'other day, and tellin' her I was a preacher, she told me the gal got a few hundred dollars every year, sent to her ever since she saved a boy from the academy from drownin' in Lover's Leap Basin."

"I wish I c'd save a boy from drownin', or a gal either, and some durned fool o' a daddy would send me money; guess I'd live honest, ef it was enough to support me; but yonder comes the gal with her chink, and she's likely-lookin', too."

"She are a screamer for beauty, and would make ther swells on Broadway stare, I tell you. Now I'll clap my paw over her mouth while you tie her hands; then we'll gag her and let her go."

"And ef she squeals?"

"Don't you use that ugly knife o' yourn; durn yer, you hain't got no conscience; but ef she gives us too much trouble, I'll jam her head for her, and then we'll skip."

The object of this pair of worthies' attentions was coming along the path, at a brisk, light step, wholly unsuspecting danger, and clasping in her tiny gloved hand an express package, to get which had taken her to the village, two miles from her home, an errand which she went on each year, ever since when, only fourteen, she had risked her own life to save a boy from drowning, and whose grateful parent had settled upon her the modest income of three hundred dollars.

One look upon the young girl, and a person would be surprised to see such rare loveliness of face and form in an humble country lass, while in walk and manner she was most queenly, though she certainly could not have passed her seventeenth year.

Though plainly dressed in cambric, and sunnat, everything she wore suited her perfectly, even to her well-fitting gloves, and had been selected with exquisite taste for one away from the fashionable life of cities.

With large, lustrous black eyes, and long, sweeping lashes, and arched brows of ebony hue, and lily complexion, she yet had entwined around her haughty head masses of red-gold hair, that shone in the sunlight like golden threads, and presented a striking and strangely beautiful contrast to the brilliant orbs in which there shone so much of passion and power.

A few more steps and she had entered the maple grove, and, with the agile spring of cats, the two villains were upon her, one to fall to the ground beneath a terrible blow in the face, and the other to feel the muzzle of a double-barrel shot-gun against his head.

So sudden had been the attack, and so unexpectedly sudden the rescue, that the maiden had hardly had time to realize her danger, before she saw that it was over, and she turned her pale face and splendid, startled eyes upon her preserver, who, before she could utter a word, said:

"Bring me my game-bag, please—it lies yonder—and I will tie these two gentlemen from the metropolis."

Without a word she obeyed, and quickly removed the straps from the bag and handed

them to him, the men, in the meantime, kept cowed by the fear of the gun, and one crouching down where he had fallen, the other trembling with disgust, rage and despair.

"Now, take my gun, please, and if that fellow moves let him have its contents," was the somewhat cool request of the young hunter; but the maiden took it promptly, and in a manner that showed she not only knew how to use it, but would do so, did occasion offer, while the young man, with a strength that surprised his fair companion, as well as the recipients of his attentions, hurled the standing footpad to the ground, and, with skill and dispatch, bound securely his hands behind his back, after which he likewise secured the other, who remarked, sullenly:

"I say, cove, let up on a feller; we was only tryin' to skeer the miss."

"You are a liar, as well as a thief, for I lay yonder and heard your whole plot to rob her of her express package, and perhaps kill her did she give you trouble."

"We is poor, an' you is rich; thet makes the difrence which is the thieves," remarked the other ruffian, as if in excuse for his crime.

"You need not plead your case to me, for I shall turn you over to the constable, and send you to the New York Chief of Police, who will, doubtless, recognize you as old offenders; thank you, miss, and if you'll give me my gun, I will escort these gentlemen into town; or, if you are afraid to continue on alone, I will, if you go to the village with me, accompany you back, with pleasure."

Perhaps it would have been more proper for the maiden to have gone on home alone, for there was little fear of there being a second danger awaiting her; but she glanced into the face of her preserver, and with the sudden impulse of her nature decided, saying, in her full, rich tones:

"I will go with you, for I wish mother to thank you for all you have done for me."

The young man seemed pleased at her decision, for already had he felt the power of her eyes, and he motioned to the prisoners to march, which they did, sullenly, one remarking:

"Bill, this is gettin' interestiner; these two is goin' to git spoony on each other."

"Yas, catchin' us, is makin' a story paper romance for these honeys, and we'll be heroes."

"You'll be carried into town with broken heads, if you do not keep silent," said their captor, sternly, and the maiden's face that had whitened with fear, now turned crimson at the prognostications of the footpads.

Thus met Burton Prince and Helen Boyd.

And from that day their friendship began—a friendship that caused each one to clasp their hands, when in the far future they looked back upon the past, and utter, in agony of spirit, the fateful cry:

"Would to God we had never met!"

CHAPTER II.

THE POOR STUDENT.

"Ah me! I am pressed hard against the wall of adversity now."

The speaker was a young man in his twenty-first year, with a pale, intellectual, and handsome face, expressive of firmness and manliness of character one would hardly expect to find in a person of his age.

His suit was threadbare, but clean, and his whole appearance indicative of one who had a hard struggle with the world, for his room was comfortless; a cot-bed, chair or two, and table comprised its furniture, and his slender wardrobe was contained in an antiquated trunk.

And yet, Carl Brandt, student at Valley View Academy, was one of the most popular pupils in that classic abode of learning, for he always had a kindly word for the younger pupils, aided his own class in their studies, and in athletic sports had but one equal, Burton Prince, the handsome, dissipated son of a millionaire banker of New York.

The son of a poor clergyman in Delaware, whose charge paid him a bare pittance, Carl Brandt had, to attend the Valley View Academy, where he was entered upon easy terms, tramped all the way there, to save the railroad expenses with which to fit up his room.

From time to time his father had sent him what money he could, and yet a week before the time he was to graduate, a letter came with no remittance, and a regret that not another dollar could be given, as the miserable salary upon which the minister supported his family, had been cut down by the parishioners, who, on account of the hard times, began to economize in their own home-circles by robbing their clergyman of his just dues.

It was the reception of this letter that caused

Carl Brandt to utter the words that open this chapter.

"And what shall I do?" he continued, after a moment of painful silence.

"I owe here, for tuition, books, the tailor and the shoemaker, about forty dollars, yes, forty-one dollars and sixty cents, and what I have in this room will bring about five, while I have one dollar and a half in my pocket; oh! what shall I do?"

He bent his head in his hands and leant upon the window-sill, uncaring now for the magnificent landscape spread out before his vision, and which he had admired so often before, while poring over his studies.

A knock at the door aroused him, and the steward entered, a bundle of papers in his hand.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Brandt, but I'm collecting board-bills, and the president asked me to hand in this little balance on tuition and books."

Carl Brandt took the three bills mechanically, and said, faintly:

"I will see to them, Herndon."

"Oh, I know that, sir, for if you are poor, there is no man at the academy whose credit is better; guess you'll get calls from Roberts and Weil, sir, for they are around collecting," and the steward disappeared, while the student groaned:

"The tailor and bootmaker! oh poverty, thou art a curse almost equaling crime. Come in!"

It was the bootmaker, Weil, and over his shoulder peered the cunning visage of Roberts, the tailor.

Their accounts had been some time due, Carl depending upon the remittance expected from his father to pay them, and his face they intuitively read, as expressing his inability to do so.

"Mr. Brandt, I have called with my bill," said the tailor.

"And av you please pay mine pill, too," chimed in the bootmaker.

"Gentlemen, I hope to pay all that I owe, but I was disappointed to-day in my money matters, and will have to ask you to wait a little while."

"Nein, mine frint, I doesn't pe wait a minute."

"Nor can I wait; if you do not pay my bill now, I will seize your things."

"Vell, dat vill leave me not'ings, so I vill have t'e law mit you."

"It is best so, Weil, or he will give us the slip; these students are tricky fellows," insultingly said the tailor.

"Yes, they ish very sly, and I wants my monish."

Carl Brandt's naturally pale face was now ghastly and his lips firm set, for he was in despair, for, having been a very small dealer with the two men, as his purse would not allow him to get more than necessities, he knew they would press him harder for the little he did owe.

As he stood in painful silence, gazing from the window, his eye suddenly fell upon the elegant form of Burton Prince, swinging in a hammock in the yard below.

"He has an income of thousands; would he not lend me a few dollars?" he murmured, and then added:

"I fear he may not have it, as it is said he squanders everything on that poor girl rumor says he has insnared; but I will ask him."

Turning he said to the two creditors, who were excitedly talking together, as though the few dollars Carl Brandt owed them would cause their financial ruin if they did not get them:

"I will soon return; wait for me."

"You are not going to give us the grand bounce, hey, young feller?"

"Ish he going to skip mit himself?"

Carl Brandt turned upon the two insulters with flashing eyes and clenched fist, and they recoiled from before his just indignation and he left the room very pale; but, as he approached the hammock, his face flushed, for he was not a man to ask favors, and had always been independent, from the time when he went to sea before the mast when but twelve, to aid the expenses at home, but five years after returned, to see his mother die, and, with what little he had saved up, went to college to get an education, to suit the aristocratic ideas of his father.

"Burton," he said, in an embarrassed way, "I have a great favor to ask of you."

"All right, Carl; how can I serve you?" said Burton Prince, the hero of the footpad adventure six months before.

"I have just received a letter from my father, and he writes that his parishioners have

cut down his salary, and that he cannot send—"

"Don't mention it, Brandt, but tell me how much money do you want?" said Burton, pleasantly.

"Fifty dollars," and the, to Carl Brandt, enormous sum nearly choked him as he uttered the amount.

"Phew! you are modest; I thought it would be four times that sum; but you should have had it, though I am short now myself, as I've been spending too much upon that little beauty people are making such a fuss about, as though she didn't know what she was doing, or I either. Call it a hundred, Carl, for I have no smaller bill," and the young heir to a million drew out a roll of bills that fairly dazzled the poor student's eyes.

"I can arrange with fifty, thank you, Burton, and your kindness I will repay, but never forget."

"Take the hundred, for it may come in useful before you get work, and if you never repay it, I will not feel it; here, I am glad to serve you."

"I will hand you back the change, for I do not wish to shoulder too large a debt of money, as well as gratitude. Ah, Burton, you have made me a happy man," and the poor student turned away, and in five minutes more he had paid the steward, and with his roll of bills in his hand, ascended to his room.

His creditors were waiting, their humor the worse for the delay; but when they saw the money their faces lighted up, and the tailor said in a sycophantic manner:

"I am sorry we are going to lose you, Mr. Brandt."

"Yes, you ish a very nice young mans," added Weil.

"I wish no compliments from such heartless wretches as you have shown yourselves to be; what is your bill, Roberts?"

There was no mistaking Carl Brandt's look and manner, and the tailor said quickly:

"Seven dollars, sir."

"Receipt it; here is your money, and, Well, what do I owe you?"

"There was one pair boots, and—"

"The whole amount, sir, for I am losing my patience."

"Yes, it ish nine tollars, my dear."

"Receipt this bill; there is your money, and both of you get out of that door, if you do not wish to take a shorter route out the window."

The haste with which the two men obeyed brought a smile to the face of the student, and he again took a seat by the window, and mused:

"Generous-hearted Burton Prince, he shall ever hold a warm place in my memory, be his faults and his follies what they may, and I know that he is wild and dissipated; but I hope not as bad as rumor would make him, in speaking of his conduct toward pretty Helen Boyd. Come in!" he called out, as a knock came upon the door.

A student entered, and in his hand he held a letter, bordered with black, while he said, kindly:

"I hope no bad news, Carl."

With a trembling hand and white face Carl Brandt broke the seal, and read a few lines, and then said in hoarse tones:

"Yes, yes, the worst of news; my father is dead."

His fellow-student grasped his hand in sympathy, and silently left the room, and Carl Brandt was alone with his grief.

After a while he read the letter through; it was from a vestryman of his father's church, telling him that the Rev. Dr. Lucius Brandt had died suddenly of heart disease, in his library, and while writing his sermon for the coming Sabbath; that the church would bury him with honor, but that his daughter, Carl's little sister Florette, would be taken care of for a few weeks, until she could be sent for by her brother, who of course would become her protector.

It was a coldly-written letter, and Carl Brandt was almost crushed by the blow; but he decided to go to Burton Prince and tell him that he would keep the balance of the hundred dollars, which he had urged upon him, and then start at once for home.

"Home! Oh, the mockery of the word, for I have no home," he said, bitterly; "but I will have one, for I shall work day and night for you, little sister mine," he added, more hopefully, and he went in search of his benefactor.

"Burton Prince, did you ask for, Carl? Why, there's but one place to find him, when he's not at recitations, and that is down at the Lover's Leap Cottage," laughingly said a fellow-student.

"Then he'll not return before supper?"

"Make it midnight, for what cares he for the president's kicking at his late hours? He's too rich to be expelled."

Carl Brandt returned to his room, wrote an explanatory note to Burton Prince about the odd fifty, and then packed up the things he wished to take with him, the steward giving him five dollars for his furniture.

Bidding the president and his fellow-students good-by he left Valley View Academy forever, and an hour after was rushing along in the cars toward his desolate home in Delaware, where a dead father and parentless little girl awaited him.

But he was not in despair, for in his pocket he had a roll of bills, over his expenses, and though he knew that it must be paid back again, he had the use of it, and it would keep the wolf from the door for the present; but had he been able to see what the receiving of that money held in store for him, he would have rather died than taken it from the hands of Burton Prince.

CHAPTER III.

A MADMAN'S LOVE.

"AND thus you would desert me, Burton Prince?"

"No, Helen, and you are unkind to take that view of it, for I have told you that the governor has shut down upon me in money matters, as busybodies have written him regarding our—our—friendship, and of course exaggerated the matter, until he is determined to put an end to it by starving my pocket-book, which he knows will bring me to terms."

"What terms, Burton?"

"Well, he wants me, now that I will graduate in a week's time, to return to New York and enter the bank as assistant cashier, and if I show a willingness to give up my wild life, he will come down handsomely."

"I believe you once told me he wished you to marry the daughter of one of his aristocratic and wealthy friends, a beauty and an heiress?" and there was a sneer in the tone of Helen Boyd.

"Oh, yes, and I have allowed him to believe that I could be led like a lamb to the slaughter, for what could I do when he holds the purse-strings? But of course I will not marry her."

"Of course not, Burton Prince, as I am your legal wife."

The young man winced; but he said quickly: "True, Helen, and one of these days I will acknowledge you as such; but you have sworn to keep our marriage a secret until I am willing to have you make it known."

"Next week I start for the city, and then, after a few weeks' vacation, I will go to work in the bank, and within two months' time can send for you, and you shall have a cosey little home, and we will be so happy."

"And you will let your father know that I am your wife?" said the girl, pleadingly.

"It wouldn't be very healthy for me to let him think that you were otherwise," was the rather evasive answer, and then he continued:

"I will leave you ample funds, Helen, and—"

"And mother, Burton, what can I say to her, for you know that my conduct with you has almost broken her heart, and she told me only last night, that the villagers all believed me a guilty girl, or I would not accept the presents I do from you. Oh, Burton, let me make known our marriage, for I am believed by all to be a thing of shame."

She placed her perfectly molded arms around his neck and gazed with piteous, appealing look into his face; but he said, coldly:

"They merely report the rumors of three months ago, Helen, and you can stand them a little longer, and then all will come well; don't be a silly goose."

"And mother, can she go to the city with me?"

"No, I fear the metropolitan life would kill your mother, for she is getting old—"

"Only fifty, Burton."

"Fifty! why how old that is! When I am fifty I'll feel like Methuselah, for my motto is a short life and a merry one; but let your mother remain here, and I will pay off the mortgage on the farm and make her as comfortable as possible."

"Ah, me! I hope all will come well, yet I cannot but doubt you, Burton; but," and her eyes flashed fire, "should you deceive me, Burton Prince, you will curse the day that you were born."

The man, in spite of his nerve, felt a thrill run through him at Helen's threat, and with a promise to see her soon again, he left her stand-

ing alone upon the spot that had been their trysting place for months, a wild, jutting rock overhanging the river that swept madly by, hundreds of feet below.

Helen knew the place but too well, for, in the days before she had met Burton Prince, she was wont to go there with her most favored lover, Edgar Monkton, the village school-teacher, who had fallen in love with his fair pupil the first day that he met her.

And rumor had it that Edgar Monkton would marry Helen Boyd; but, rumor went astray when Burton Prince met the beauty, and the poor school-teacher nursed his jealousy in silence and brooded mournfully over his lost love.

Now, as she stood upon Lover's Leap, from whence, a century ago, an Indian maiden had sprung to her death on account of a false lover, she looked far beneath her upon the wild Housatonic, as it bounded through its rocky gateway, and said, bitterly:

"I am half inclined to end my doubts and sorrows, as did that poor Indian girl, and spring from this dizzy height," and with utter recklessness she leaned over the precipice.

"Helen Boyd, has the guilty soul in your bosom driven you to contemplate suicide?"

The maiden uttered a startled cry, and reeled upon the very edge of the precipice, but, with an agile spring, she recovered herself, and faced the speaker whose words at her back had so startled her.

He was a man of thirty, with a strongly-marked face, good form, and, attired in homespun suit and straw hat, presented a striking contrast to the elegant Burton Prince, who had last stood where he did.

"Edgar Monkton, you nearly cost me my life," she said, with flashing eyes.

"Had I done so, it would have saved you from the life of misery and shame before you," he said, bitterly.

"How dare you speak thus to me, Edgar Monkton? you are nothing to me, and you have no claim upon me."

"Ah, Helen, I had the claim of love, for, on this very spot, with these old pines sheltering us, I told you of my love for you, and heard your response, which I now know was false, false as your heart has proven to me," said the school-teacher, commencing his sentence in a sad tone, and ending with a savage earnestness that frightened the girl, for she noticed that his manner was wild, and his eyes shone with a glitter she had never before seen in them.

"Stand aside, sir, and let me pass," she said, firmly.

"No, you shall not pass here, Helen Boyd; here your destiny and mine must be shaped for the future, for I will not give you up."

"What do you mean, Edgar Monkton? You have no claim upon me," she said, alarmed, now, thoroughly, for his usually soft and winning manner had changed in a wonderful degree.

"Helen Boyd, I mean that I offered you my love, and you accepted it, and in heaven our vows are registered; now, tell me, do you retract your pledge to me?"

"Most assuredly. I was but a child, and I was flattered by your attentions, and admired you, believing my admiration to be love. I now know to the contrary, and we can never be more than friends."

"Bah! I have plenty of friends; it is a wife I want," he said, violently.

"We can never be more than we are now to each other."

"Helen, you do not know the Monkton nature, if you think I will tamely submit to being cast aside like a well-worn glove. No, no, you are to be my wife, and unless you swear, upon your honor as a woman, to marry me, I will hurl you from here into the mad waters below."

Startled by his words, surprised at his manner, and with his awful threat ringing in her ears, Helen knew not what to say or do; but she cried, as he stepped toward her:

"Out upon such manhood, Edgar Monkton! to attempt to force a woman to love you by vile threats."

"Do you promise?"

"No!" she said, still brave in the face of impending danger.

"You shall!" and he advanced nearer.

"I cannot!" she said, pleadingly.

"Give me a reason, and I will be the judge."

His voice was low and hoarse, and his eyes gleamed with savage brightness, and she knew that she stood in the presence of a madman.

"Your reason; I am your judge."

"I am a wife already!"

The words were wrung from her by terror for her life; but they had better not have been

uttered, for they drove him to desperation, and he sprang toward her shouting:

"His wife! then God knows you shall die!"

There was no escape for her, for she stood almost upon the edge of the dizzy height, and her loudest cry would not reach the nearest farmhouse; she felt that her life must there end, and horror clutched her heart at the thought, though a few moments before she had calmly contemplated springing into the waters below of her own free will.

The next instant his mad grasp was upon her, and she was powerless in his hands; she closed her eyes in despair, shutting out the bright sunshine, glimmering river, pine-feathered hills and pleasant valley.

But, when all hope had gone from her heart there came a sharp report, a whizzing sound, and Edgar Monkton's hold upon her was loosened, while he reeled with outstretched arms and staring eyes.

With noble impulse she sprang forward to save him; but she was too late, as he went backward over the precipice, and down from sight swept his form toward the depths below.

She heard the heavy splash, as his body struck the water; then her strength gave way and she sunk upon the moss-covered rock, while across the chasm, on the other abrupt edge of the mountain, severed by the rushing river, she saw a man appear, holding a rifle in his hand, and heard his cheering cry:

"I'll be with you in a moment."

Then he disappeared from sight; but watching the shore she saw him reappear, spring into a waiting boat and row across the basin below Lover's Leap, the large, dark pool into which the Housatonic poured after rushing through the severed mountains, and which the dwellers near said was bottomless.

As if unconscious that his boat glided above the form of the man whom his shot had sent to sink forever into the depths of the bottomless basin, the stranger landed and nimbly climbed the craggy sides of the precipice and stood before Helen Boyd.

His story was soon told; he was idling a few weeks away at a farm-house down the valley, lived in New York, and was to return home the following day, and was out for a farewell hunt when he witnessed the scene from the other cliff, and was glad that he had risked the shot.

As he spoke he gazed with undisguised admiration upon the beautiful girl, and, with a refinement of feeling, in accord with his courtly manners and gentlemanly appearance, he asked no questions regarding the strange scene he had fortunately been a witness of.

A full moment Helen Boyd gazed into the face of the man before her, and then, as if having come to some decision, she said in her low, musical tones, laying her hand upon his arm:

"You have saved my life; saved me from a fearful death, and I have no right to ask more of you; but yet I do."

"You have but to command, and I obey," he said, gallantly.

"It is a strange request, and one which you cannot understand, and which I will not explain; but which, one of these days, I may make known, for I am going to New York soon to live, and we may meet."

He felt the power of her wondrous eyes, and answered, as she paused:

"The request is granted, even before I know its tenor."

She was silent for a moment, and her face became very pale, as she said, in almost a whisper:

"It is very kind of you; the request is, that you do not make known to any one what has just taken place."

He started visibly, and gazed searchingly into her face, while he responded in a voice that showed he was deeply moved:

"A life on one's hands is not a pleasant secret to bear, for haunting memories from the grave dog our steps untiringly; but I promise, as I pledged my word, and I believe no one saw what occurred; but are you certain that you can keep the secret?"

"Try me; we shall meet again; now goodbye."

He grasped her hand, and she pressed his warmly, and then with a glance and shudder into the depths below, she walked rapidly away, murmuring to herself:

"That man has a history, I know, and his dark, handsome face will haunt me with that of poor Edgar Monkton."

CHAPTER IV.

A WOMAN'S VOW.

THE little village, in which Edgar Monkton

had taught the "young ideas how to shoot," was terribly excited over the unaccountable disappearance of the teacher, who had won the hearts of parents and scholars alike during his sojourn of three years in their midst.

He had left his home on Saturday morning, but at night had not returned, and when the following day he had not appeared a general alarm was spread, and a search was instituted.

It was known that he was wont to take long walks alone, visiting the distant mountains, and since Helen Boyd had set him adrift he had been like

"An earless barque
Upon a storm-swept sea,"

and many had noticed that he had taken to heart the broken vows of the beautiful coquette, for his lonely walks became more frequent, and with a desire to accumulate riches, for he said the maiden had been lured by the money of Burton Prince, he was in the habit of visiting an old mine, worked by an English company before the Revolutionary war, but left in desolation for more than a hundred years.

Into the shafts of this mine he would go, so 'twas said, and work untiringly, hoping to dig out of the generous rocks gold enough to make him, too, a millionaire.

Thither, then, a party went to seek him; the old mine was explored to its furthest recess, but without result, while others searched every pathway of the mountain and valley.

But in the deep basin under the shadow of Lover's Leap none thought to look, and the secret of that scene on the pine-clad cliff remained buried in the hearts of two persons.

With feigned surprise, and bitter sorrow, Helen Boyd heard the report of Edgar Monkton's disappearance, and, as day after day went by, and no tidings of his fate were known, she breathed more freely, and soon felt that the mystery must remain a mystery with all except herself and that other one.

"And who was that other one?" she asked herself over and over again.

A man who had saved her life by a daring shot that proved his nerve, and unerring aim, for a miss of the mark and her brain might have been pierced by the bullet.

A man who had calmly granted her request to keep the deed a secret, and one whose name she even did not know, but whose face haunted her as did the remembrance of poor Edgar Monkton's fate.

For a long time Helen Boyd did not have courage to go to Lover's Leap; but, one day, after Burton Prince had been gone for two months, and the mountain-sides were tinged with the red and gold of autumn, she started for the old trysting place, carrying in her hand a letter just received, and still unread.

It was addressed in the bold hand of Burton Prince, and must bring to her the promised word to come, and she wished to read it all alone.

Seating herself upon the mossy rock, beneath the sighing pines, that seemed now to her to be chanting a requiem over the resting-place of Edgar Monkton, Helen Boyd broke the seal of her letter, shuddering, as her eyes involuntarily turned upon the black, waveless waters of the basin, below, which had closed over the dark secret resting beneath, to shut it out, she hoped, forever from the world.

The letter she read with staring eyes, livid face, and close-shut teeth; why, the reader can see by its perusal:

"BANKING HOUSE, PRINCE & Co., }
"NEW YORK, Oct. 1st, 18—."

"MY DEAR HELEN:

"Now do not get angry with me because I do not call you darling, or pet, and cry your glorious eyes out at what I am going to tell you; but the truth is, I have had another darling forced upon me by that governor of mine; that is, he has forced me into an engagement with Berta Ivey, of whom you have heard me speak.

"She is a most deserving girl, far too good for me, I am free to acknowledge; but her personal income is forty thousand a year, and she is an heiress besides, and our fathers are

"'Boon companions o'er the bowl,'

as Byron says, so you see I am forced to obey, for it was in vain that I told the old man that I loved another, and all that; he would listen to nothing, and told me he would send me away from home without a dollar, and cut me off with a luck penny.

"You will say, why did I not confess that I was married, and allow him to see you, trusting to your splendid fascinations and marvelous beauty to win him over?

"Your question gives me pain to answer, for I do not like to confess the deception I practiced upon you; but, Helen, we were not legally married.

"There now, I can see those superb eyes snap, and that exquisite mouth contract; but, it is the truth, for the man who married us was a hireling of mine.

paid to play his part, and not a minister, as you supposed.

"Forgive me, my beautiful Helen, but I could not give you up; but, as no one knows of the fictitious marriage, you can soon catch a beau—that young teacher who was sweet upon you, if he has turned up yet—and if you cannot in Milford find one to your taste, why, come to New York, for there are thousands here who would bow down to your feet for one of your brilliant smiles, and you would soon learn your power.

"Having made my confession, I beg to inclose a check for one thousand dollars, which will pay off the mortgage on the farm, and keep yourself and mother along until I marry Berta Ivey, when I will send you a handsome sum, for her money will then be mine, you know.

"If you decide to come to the city at any time write to me, but I would advise against it, for New York is a dangerous place for young girls, and especially pretty ones; and if you need more money, write me.

"Now, what can I say more—oh! I nearly forgot: by express to-day I send you a *solitaire* diamond ring, which wear in remembrance of me, in place of the one with which the mock marriage was performed.

"Now, farewell, and ever believe in the friendship of
Yours, lovingly,
BURT.

"P. S.—I forgot to tell you about that straight-faced specimen of morality who you remember was at the Academy with me; I refer to Carl Brandt, the parson's son.

"Well, after his father's death he came to this wicked Gotham to get work, and was in a fair way to starve, when one day my little sister, Marion, was out driving with her ponies; taking fright, they ran away, but were cleverly caught and stopped by a young fellow, who proved to be none other than Carl Brandt.

"He broke his arm in the struggle with the ponies, but there is no doubt but that he saved Marion's life, and the governor made him a clerk in the bank, and has promoted him twice, until I expect to see him take him into partnership before the year's out; but the fellow's devilish sly, I'm thinking, as I passed his rooms the other day and saw an exquisitely lovely face at the window with him, which carries out the old adage of preachers' sons and deacons' daughters needing watching.

"But again I must say adieu.

"Yours,

BURT."

Until the sun was sinking beneath the mountains, did Helen Boyd sit after reading this cruel letter, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her hands clenched tight, her lips set, and her bosom heaving, as though her heart would burst in its agony.

At length she arose, calm and decided, and from her lips came the words:

"Curses upon you, forever, Burton Prince, for the wrong you have done me! but I'll take your advice and go to the city, for I do know my power, and men shall feel it, while I vow to revenge myself on you; it is a woman's vow, but it shall be kept, I swear it by the body of Edgar Monkton, that lies in those dark waters."

Thrusting the cold, heartless letter into her bosom, she retraced her way adown the path, and, after a walk of ten minutes, turned into a white gate leading to a pleasant cottage, nestling under the hillside.

It was the home where she was born, and upon whose hearthstone her own acts would bring a curse.

Whether she kept her vow, the sequel will show.

CHAPTER V.

SELF-ACCUSED.

"BROTHER Carl, you seem troubled; won't you tell me what it is?" and Florette laid her little hand caressingly upon her brother's shoulder, as he arose to go into the adjoining room to the breakfast she had prepared for him.

The scene has changed now, from the mountains that shelter the valley of the Housatonic, to a cosey "flat" in a quiet street of New York city, the great metropolis of the western hemisphere.

Six months have gone by since Carl Brandt turned his back upon the academic halls in old Connecticut, and came to the city to live, where, after hovering upon the very verge of starvation, he had at last received a situation in the banking firm of Prince & Co., given him in gratitude, by the senior member, for having saved the life of his idol, his beautiful daughter, Marion.

With the salary then at his command the fortunes of Carl Brandt arose, and from the dingy little boarding-house on Pearl street, where he and his sister Florette had found a home, he moved into a more desirable neighborhood near Washington Park, and rented a little flat of three rooms.

With Florette as housekeeper, and a negro girl as maid-of-all-work, the brother and sister lived happily together, Carl each week laying by some of his salary for a rainy day and how-

ing won the full confidence of his employer and fellow-clerks, the future looked bright and hopeful.

But one morning, long to be remembered by both of them, Florette had noticed a troubled look upon his face, and had asked the question, saying pleadingly, as he remained silent:

"Won't you tell me, brother Carl?"

"I am troubled at something that took place last night, but which you could not understand, Florette; well, I must be off, for it is nearly nine o'clock."

Kissing her good-by he left the house, Florette, a little child-woman of thirteen, with sunny hair and large blue eyes, watching him until he was out of sight down the street, for she dearly loved that big, noble brother of hers.

"Mr. Prince was just going to send for you, sir," said a fellow-clerk, as Carl entered, and he noticed there seemed considerable excitement among all in the bank.

Laying aside his hat and overcoat, he went to the private office, and to his surprise found the two members of the firm there, and also the head cashier and Burton, all of them looking as though deeply moved at something that had occurred.

"Mr. Brandt, I was just about to send for you, sir, when you were reported coming; do you know that the bank was robbed last night?"

Carl Brandt started visibly, turning suddenly pale, a circumstance that all present noticed, but he said firmly:

"No, sir; the safe was blown open by burglars, I suppose?"

"No, it was unlocked and entered, and ten thousand dollars in bills taken," said Mr. Prince, a bluff, aristocratic old man of sixty."

"That cannot be, sir, as I carried the keys last night, at the request of Mr. Burton Prince, who said he was going out of town; here they are, sir."

"And yet the watchman came to my house at eight o'clock and told me the safe was open; did you close it last night, sir?"

"No, but, as Mr. Burton Prince carries the keys, I supposed that he had."

"And you are certain that you locked the safe, Burton?" asked Mr. Prince of his son, who replied, pettishly:

"Father, it is silly to ask the question. Would I leave a million in property thus exposed? I locked the safe, and, as Brandt says, gave him the keys, expecting to run down to Long Branch for the night, but, missing the boat, I did not go."

"Mr. Brandt, this certainly has a very suspicious look; were you at the bank last night?" asked the senior partner.

"I was, sir, for some three hours, going over my accounts; I left at eleven o'clock and started upon my return home, but again came back here, as I had forgotten my pocket-book, and the man was to call for the rent this morning."

"Upon my return I met one of the persons connected with the bank, entering by the private office, but as he did not speak to me, I said nothing to him."

"I only have the key to the private office, sir, and I was at home in bed, so who was the person you saw?"

"For the present I decline to say, sir," was the surprising and calm rejoinder.

"This is strange, very strange, and, Mr. Brandt, it casts still greater suspicion on you, for I am sorry to say that you are suspected."

"Great God! do you mean what you say, Mr. Prince?" cried Carl, now as white as a corpse.

"I do, sir; you had the keys last night, the safe door was found unlocked this morning, and upon examination the cashiers say that ten thousand dollars in bills are missing, while, by your own confession, you were here last night, and after leaving, returned to see one of the firm entering this private office."

"One from the office, sir, I said, not the firm."

"So be it; you refuse to tell who that was, and this adds to the suspicion against you, especially as the watchman on this beat says he saw you leave the bank at two o'clock, while you say you departed at eleven; also, he says you carried a package in your hand; so, under the circumstances, I must hold you as the midnight thief."

Carl Brandt was speechless with amazement, and glanced from one to the other with a look of misery and pleading they long remembered.

At length his gaze rested upon Burton Prince, and for a few seconds the two men looked straight into each other's eyes.

"Have you nothing to say in my defense, Burton?" he asked, in a voice that trembled.

"What can I say, Brandt? The money was in the safe when I gave you the keys, and this morning it is gone, and the safe unlocked, while you were here last night. From my heart I pity you, Carl, but before the law you must plead your guilt or innocence."

"Well, sir, what do you say now, for the proofs are against you, though God knows I would have as soon suspected my own son to be guilty as you," said banker Prince, evidently deeply moved.

Carl Brandt stood for a moment in silence, his eyes flashing, and he was about to speak, when into the room glided a fairy-like form, and a face with the spirituelle loveliness of a Madonna.

She was exquisitely and richly dressed, and bowing pleasantly to those present, said in a voice of rare sweetness:

"Come, papa, I am ready for our drive. You ran away from the house before I saw you."

"Not to-day, Marion, for I am worried, as the safe has been opened and robbed during the night."

"The bank robbed? and by whom?" asked Marion, in surprise, opening her beautiful eyes wide with astonishment.

"I have just been compelled to accuse Mr. Brandt there."

"Never! Carl Brandt could be guilty of no mean action, father, and it is a shame to accuse him; look elsewhere for your thief," and drawing herself up proudly, she turned upon those before her, her face expressive of the utmost indignation.

But had an earthquake shaken that solid house to its center, it would not have caused more consternation than the words that followed, in distinct, unhesitating tones, from the lips of Carl Brandt:

"I thank you for your kind words, Miss Prince, but your trust in me is misplaced; I am the thief."

A wail broke from the lovely girl, and she sunk back into her brother's arms, while the old banker said, sternly:

"Call an officer and send that man to prison!"

CHAPTER VI.

TWO VISITORS.

CARL BRANDT sat alone in his dismal cell, brooding sadly over his downfall; the day before all hope, to-day in despair.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said the guard, and the iron door swung open, admitting a person whom Carl remembered to have seen before, but did not know, other than 'twas said he was immensely rich, gambled heavily, and whiled away his time in driving fast horses, sailing his yacht, and was quite a lion in society, though he had evidently seen his forty-fifth year.

"My name is Castleton, sir, Brete Castleton, and I have come to have a little talk with you," and, turning to the guard, he handed him a ten-dollar gold piece, and continued:

"Just step to yonder window, my friend, and look at the artistic work on this gold."

The man took the hint that the visitor wished to be alone with the prisoner and obeyed, when Colonel Brete Castleton again turned to Carl, who said, simply:

"Be seated, sir," and he pointed to the bench, while he sat down upon the cot.

Colonel Castleton was certainly a very distinguished looking man, a little too flashy, perhaps, in his dress, but then it was excused in him by women, and men did not care to criticise, for those who pretended to know, said the colonel had been a very brave soldier in the Mexican war, and had fought several fatal duels in his native State, Louisiana; at any rate, there was a dangerous light way back in his dark eyes that showed he would not stand trifling.

"Mr. Brandt, this is a bad fix you have gotten into," he said, in a kindly way.

"It is, sir; I am very unfortunate," responded Carl, sadly.

"What was your motive, may I ask, in laying the guilt upon yourself?"

Carl Brandt started, and eyed his visitor, keenly.

"I was accused; circumstances pointed to me as the criminal, so why deny the charge?" he answered.

"And yet you should have done so, and did wrong to let the blame fall upon you, when you knew the junior member of the firm was the guilty party."

"The junior member! do you refer to Mr. Harvey De Vigne?" asked Carl, in surprise.

"I do; it has been known of late that he has

been playing heavily and could not draw more out of the firm to pay his losses with, and he was the one you saw enter that night by the way of the private office," and Colonel Castleton looked straight into the face of the man before him, upon whose countenance the color went and came painfully, showing that he was deeply moved.

"Mr. Brandt," the colonel went on, "I know that in Harvey De Vigne you recognized, after you came to the bank as a clerk, one who, years before, had befriended you on board ship, when you was a cabin-boy and he a midshipman, and that when you fell from the main-top one night of storm, and broke your arm by striking the yard and plunged into the sea, it was the young banker who sprung overboard and held you up until the life-boat rescued you; these are the reasons why you accused yourself of the crime, are they not?"

"Colonel Castleton, I do not see why you should come here and ascribe motives of action to me of this kind. I greatly admire Mr. De Vigne, I admit, but he was not the guilty one, as I confessed to the theft."

"And I say you are not guilty, and wish to save you, if you will do as I require."

"And what do you wish?"

"Place the charge where it belongs, upon Harvey De Vigne, and I will have it proven by witnesses that he is guilty, and that you accused yourself merely to save him. Do this, and upon leaving this cell you shall have a better position than the one you held with Prince & Co."

"What your secret motives are, Colonel Castleton, for making this strange request, I cannot fathom; but you ask in vain, and, having confessed to the robbery, I will stand my trial and take the consequences."

"You are determined then?"

"I am."

The colonel frowned, and rising paced the floor, several times to and fro.

"So be it, Brandt; but I cannot help thinking you a greater fool than I thought it possible for man to be, for I know that you are not guilty."

Without another word he left the cell; but as he stepped out into the corridor the guard appeared, followed by a lady, whose brilliant beauty and superb toilet fairly startled the colonel.

"Great God! what a face is that for a man to worship," he exclaimed, and as he walked away, and saw the lady enter the cell of Carl Brandt, he called to the guard:

"Here, my man, this is a twenty, and if you find out for me the cause of that lady's visit, I'll give you its twin; here is my address," and he gave him a card.

"There is a hole in the adjoining cell, through which I can hear every word, sir," said the delighted official, mentally calling the colonel a prince of a fellow.

But the fair visitor seemed to suspect something wrong, for she said, pleasantly:

"I will stand just here in the door, guard, and if you will walk out of earshot you will confer a favor," and she slipped into the hand of the fellow a bill, which caused him to mutter as he walked away:

"Well, I'm in luck to-day. Wish I could earn that twin gold piece, but from where she stands, she would see me go into the next cell. That prisoner may be poor, but his friends are rich, and generous, too."

In the meantime the fair visitor had turned toward Carl Brandt, who rose at sight of her, though an iron chain around his left ankle made it difficult for him to move about.

"Mr. Brandt, do you not know me?" she said, in the softest of tones.

"Miss Helen Boyd!" he exclaimed, with surprise; "you here in New York?"

"Yes, I have come to the metropolis to live."

"It was kind of you to come into this loathsome place to see me."

"No; because I always liked you, Mr. Brandt, and am very deeply pained to see that you have voluntarily placed yourself in a cell, where another than you should be," and she fixed her magnificent eyes upon his face with a look that seemed to read his soul.

"I do not quite understand you," he said, hesitatingly.

"It is because you will not; but I will make myself so plain that there will be no misunderstanding me; why did you say you were guilty of a crime of which you are as innocent as I am this moment?"

"Ah, Miss Helen, it is kind of you to believe in my innocence; but I have forfeited all claim to your regard, so let it be as it is."

She tossed her head impatiently.

"You have done nothing of the kind, for you are ennobled in my mind by sacrificing yourself to save a man from shame and ruin, because he once did you a favor."

"Harvey De Vigne saved my life once, at the risk of his own, Miss Helen; but you make a mistake in charging him with guilt."

"I do not know Mr. De Vigne, nor did I refer to him, but to Burton Prince."

Again Carl Brandt started, as he had when Colonel Castleton had accused Harvey De Vigne, and seeing his countenance change Helen Boyd went on:

"Do you deny that Burton Prince is the thief?"

"Why, how could I accuse him, when I publicly admitted myself to be the criminal?"

Again she tossed her proud head impatiently, and said:

"Bah! you are incorrigible; and do you intend to suffer the penalty?"

"I do."

"It will be long years in prison."

"I know it will."

"And when your term is ended, you will still be looked upon as Brandt, the convict."

"True, and the shame will go with me and mine to the grave," he said, with bitterness.

"Carl Brandt, if you will retract the accusation against yourself, and say frankly that you did so upon impulse, to save the real culprit, Burton Prince, I will have witnesses to prove him guilty, and you shall go forth free, and I will see that you obtain a more lucrative situation than you had before."

Carl Brandt gazed upon her with surprise, for she had made the same proposition, almost, that Colonel Castleton had made, only his desire was to accuse Harvey De Vigne, the pet of society, the rich and handsome junior member of the firm of Prince & Co.

Knowing what he did of Helen's past admiration for Burton Prince, whom rumor in the old Connecticut hills said had wrecked her young life, and knowing the cashier to be engaged to Berta Ivey, Carl felt that revenge was the motive that influenced the beautiful girl to wish to fasten the guilt upon her faithless lover; after a moment's thought, he said, as he had before:

"I have confessed to the guilt, Miss Helen, and I will abide the issue."

"Carl Brandt, you are an egregious fool," burst angrily from the red lips.

Carl smiled and bowed, and then her little hand was stretched forth.

"Forgive me, Carl. Only I wish I could save you and punish the man I feel is guilty; do you need any money?"

Carl gazed upon her in a way that brought the crimson blood to her face, for she seemed to read in his mind the question there:

"Is this that pretty little country girl who dwelt in our humble cottage less than a year ago, and wore calicoes, now dressed in the costliest silks, wearing diamonds, and the most stylish woman in the metropolis?"

"Carl," and her face flushed as she read those thoughts, "do not refuse to let me aid you, for the money I would give you is not stained; will you let me aid you?"

"I have some money laid away thank you, Miss Helen, and it will serve me."

"You still doubt me; but I had some property left me years ago, a piece of land, which I found on investigation was worth several thousands, and I sold it."

"And is your mother with you?" he asked.

"No; she remains at the old cottage on the Housatonic. I came here alone for a purpose, and I shall accomplish it; but, good-by," and turning almost abruptly she left the cell and the prison, creating a flutter of admiration among the officials, as she swept through them to her carriage.

CHAPTER VII.

FLORETTE.

SLOWLY dragged the long hours away to poor Carl, after the departure of his two strange visitors, and he was glad when the jailer approached with his supper, and said:

"Your sister's to see you, sir."

"Show her in, please," and the strong mouth quivered, for though it was Florette's third visit to him in that dismal place, it cut him to the heart to have her come there.

A moment more and Florette, a perfect little fairy form, with spirituelle face, and golden hair, came into the cell, a little basket upon her arm.

Throwing her arms around her brother's neck, she kissed him affectionately, and said:

"I've brought you some cake and preserves, brother Carl, and they are good, for I made

them myself; and you must forgive me for not coming yesterday, for I was moving."

"Moving, Florette? Why did you do that?"

"Well, I thought I'd get cheaper quarters, and more suitable ones, for I'm keeping boarding-house now."

"Keeping boarding-house, Flor? What can you mean?" he asked, in surprise.

"Well, you see, Carl, people say you will have to go to prison," and her eyes filled with tears; but controlling her emotion, she continued: "and that it would be several years before you got out, so I had to do something for a living."

"But, Miss Marion Prince wrote me a note that she would see that you were cared for."

"A snap for Miss Marion Prince and all of them, too! I can take care of myself, for I've got a kitchen, a dining-room and a bedroom, all for seven dollars a month, and I've got my boarders engaged, one dollar a week day board."

"Oh, Florette! Florette!"

"Don't be angry with me, Carl, for they are not high-toned people who will cheat me, but poor, hard-working folks, for there's that crazy newspaper man, actor and whatever else he calls himself, and he's going to teach me for his board, and he's awful smart, as I've heard you say; then there's Jicksey, the bootblack, and Tip, the newsboy, and Baldy, the Bulldog, who you said was kind to you when you had no place to eat, and Will Terrill, the cat doctor, and all of that gang that we saw when we lived in Pearl street; they ain't handsome, or well-dressed, Carl, I admit, but they have good hearts, and they'll pay me when they have money."

"Oh, Florette! Florette!" groaned Carl.

"Are you angry with me, brother, because I wish to make money to give you when—when—you come back?" and she put her arms around his neck.

"No, Flor, I am not angry; but it cuts me so to feel that you have to come to this. If you only had some kind woman to look after you."

"Oh, I have; there's Mrs. O'Gorman lives in the same house, on the floor below, and she's a good woman, though her husband does get on sprees, and she says she'll see that I get along; but here is a letter from Miss Prince; she brought it to our house just as the last load of furniture was going away, and she says you are to send an answer by me."

Carl seized the letter eagerly, broke the seal, and read:

"AT HOME, Thursday.

"MY DEAR MR. BRANDT:

"Believing you innocent, notwithstanding your confession of guilt, I desire to do all in my power for you, and therefore beg that you will accede to my wishes.

"A trial will result in your sentence to prison for years, and, as you have a sister dependent upon you and who needs your aid, I trust that you will accept the inclosed sum of money, with which your guards can be bribed, and you can fly to another land, and I will see that the firm of Prince & Co. do not press the pursuit against you.

"You saved me from a fearful death once; let me do this much for you now, I entreat you.

"Yours, with continued respect,

"MARION PRINCE."

With commingled emotions Carl Brandt read this letter, and then wrote on a card, which he inclosed with the letter in the envelope from which it had been taken:

"From my inmost heart I thank you; but I will remain and bide my fate, be that what it may.

"CARL BRANDT."

"Florette, give this personally to Miss Prince, and hand her these bills, too, but be careful, for I notice there is quite a large sum."

And a large sum, indeed, there was, for the noble girl, not daring to ask her father for the amount she needed, had pledged her most valuable set of diamonds, to raise the means for Carl Brandt to gain his freedom.

Putting the money and letter safely away, Florette, after a stay of a few minutes longer, arose and took her leave, wending her way at once to the elegant mansion of the banker.

"I wish to see Miss Prince," she said to the liveried servant, who, seeing a neatly dressed and exceedingly pretty little girl, ushered her into the grand parlors.

A few moments passed, and Marion Prince swept into the room, looking very pale, but exquisitely beautiful.

"Ah, it is you, Florette," she said, kindly, for she had met the little girl once with her brother out walking, and again when she carried the letter for her to give him.

"Brother Carl asked me to return this letter and money, Miss Prince."

"And sent he no word?" asked Marion, her face flushing.

"He has written something on a card. Please

see if the money is all right," coldly said Florette, who did not like any one bearing the Prince name, as she seemed to feel that it was through them her brother got into trouble, for never had she doubted his innocence.

"I am sorry; I wish he had done as I requested; but you, Florette, where will you go?" asked the maiden, looking into the pretty, upturned face.

"Oh, I have a pleasant home to go to; good-by," and Florette turned away.

"One moment, Florette, for I wish you to promise that you will come to me, should you ever need a friend."

The child's eyes filled with tears, but, hastily brushing them away, she said:

"I'll get along all right, Miss Prince, but I thank you for your kindness," and in another moment she was gone; gone back to her little home, which, in spite of its humble aspect, was neat and comfortable.

And at the door she met Mrs. O'Gorman, who said, in her blunt, Irish way:

"And yez is afther being back, my darlint, and it's well for ye, as your boarders has been round and saying you was a pretty boardin'-house lady to let them go hungry."

"I have been to see my poor brother, Mrs. O'Gorman, and was detained; have they gone?"

"Ah, they'll be back, soon, for they left, not likin' ther swatiness o' my tongue, seein' as I isn't in a swate humor, for that Dennis O'Gorman is off on another spree, and I'm jist afther lookin' him up and layin' my two hands caressingly upon him," and Mrs. O'Gorman sauntered forth with fire in her eye, while Florette entered her room and hastily began preparing supper, a task she had not fairly begun, when a red head and freckled face popped in at the door.

"Supper ready, missus?" he asked, a grin upon his homely visage, and at the same time the remaining portion of a youth of thirteen crossed the threshold, and, clad in a pair of pants that had once been worn by a man, and wearing a patch-work jacket, Master Jicksey, the bootblack, confronted Florette at her duties.

"Supper will be ready soon, Jicksey; have you done well to-day?" she said, pleasantly.

"Polished thirty pair, and one for a fellow who had a leg off, but who gi'n me ten cents for ther job; guess I'm in a dollar and sixty cents, but hain't counted capital sin' I hed a fight with Nigger Jake, and I mout have lost a leetle in ther scrimmage."

"Oh, Jicksey, have you been fighting?"

"Couldn't help it, missus, and it was only with Nigger Jake, who called me a liar, and I'd hev licked him, too, ef ther cop hadn't come along; wouldn't I, Tip?"

This last was addressed to Tip the newsboy, another ragamuffin specimen of humanity, who made his clear dollar a day selling papers, and whose face was the very picture of mischief.

"Yas, you was givin him fits, when ole Clubby come along. It's a pity we boys can't have no fun 'ithout ther polices chippin' in. Golly, but thet ham do smell good."

"You can soon taste it, Tip; but did you sell out your papers?" asked Florette, anxious to show an interest in the business transactions of her boarders.

"You bet, for there was a nigger hung this mornin' early, you know, an' thet's prime readin', an' ther papers goes slick; but here's Baldy the Bulldog."

"Yes, I are here, ev'ry bit o' me; and how is you, Miss Florette?"

The personage who rejoiced in the above strange appellation was as strange as his name, given him not on account of his ferocious nature, for he was as gentle as a child, but from the fact of his having a head and face that resembled in a remarkable degree a bull-terrier.

That he lived by his wits there was no doubt, for, except to hold a horse, or go on an errand, Baldy was never known to work, and yet he got enough "pick-up jobs" of that kind to keep him from starvation, and he had engaged table-board with Florette, to add his little mite to her support. Where he spent his nights, it was hard to tell; but Jicksey and Tip said he took "goods-box lodging" wherever he could find one, and dodge into it when a policeman wasn't looking.

"Guess I'll pay my board, Miss Florette," said Baldy, handing a dollar to the girl.

"Thank you, Baldy; this is in advance up to next Wednesday, for you began last night."

"That's biz; you keep accounts, for I doesn't want to trouble myself with figgers," declared Baldy, with the indifference of a millionaire in a small matter, and, seeing that he had more money, Jicksey remarked:

"Guess he's struck it, Tip."
 "Yas; whar did yer find it, Baldy?"
 "I earnt it, by the sweat o' my brow, holdin' a horse for a gemman as went into a faro bank ter strangle ther tiger. Guess he strangled him, too, for he gi'n me two dollars for my work, and I has made as much more to-day."
 "Guess thet lie will strangle you; you can't show no four dollars," said Jicksey.
 Baldy immediately exhibited his pile.
 "Here are three, and one I giv to Miss Florette."

"How did you make the odd two, Baldy?" asked Tip.
 "Pickin' it up from whar some one had dropped it," answered Baldy, proudly.
 "Wish I knowed where somebody had dropped a few. I guesses I knows who would pick it up," remarked Tip.

"Supper is ready; come!"
 Florette's invitation was promptly accepted, and the three seated themselves, just as another boarder appeared in the doorway, and received a salutation from Jicksey.

"Come, Professor Romeo, we is waitin' for yer."

"So I see; good-evening, my fair hostess, whose culinary art has regaled my nostrils with the flavor of smoked hog. Ah, and I see the fruit of the hen, looking like a huge gold button in a setting of pearl—"

"Them's eggs, them is, Professor," interrupted Tip.

"Silence! thou ribald youth, and cram thy supper down and skip, for I like not well to look upon thy face. I would sit me down in peace and eat my food, for I have to feed the brain, for much work have I to-night, and wilt burn the midnight oil long after the city sleeps in calm repose."

This new boarder was, like the others, a character; a tall, slender man of thirty-five, dressed in black, and with his coat buttoned up to the paper collar that encircled his neck, giving a suspicion that he wore no shirt beneath.

But his face was intelligent and refined, and the traces of dissipation upon every feature proved that rum had been his ruin, dragging him down from positions he had once adorned, and wrecking his brain until the fires of genius had gone out forever.

And these were a specimen of Florette's boarders; humble friends, who had known her brother and herself in their poverty, and, when prosperity came to them, had been the recipients of numerous kindnesses at their hands; but who, when adversity fell upon Carl Brandt and he went to prison, had not forgotten little Florette, but sought her out in her sorrow, and urged upon her the advisability of making an effort to support herself.

Tip had heard her sing and suggested that she become a street songstress, for she played the guitar well; but Jicksey had said:

"Thet won't do; s'pose yer git a paper-stand?"

And then the "Professor" had come to her aid with the suggestion that she should keep a boarding-house; and thus it was that Florette became the fair hostess of Tip, Jicksey & Co., and numerous others whom their kindness brought to her little home.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRACKED.

"By the Goddess of Beauty! who is that angel in petticoats, Prince?"

The speaker was Colonel Brete Castleton, and he was walking arm-in-arm with Burton Prince, and, slowly sauntering along, they were admiring the throng of lovely women and fashionable men upon Broadway, enjoying the balmy air of an early spring afternoon.

Often the two gentlemen raised their hats to some lady friend, or nodded pleasantly to a male acquaintance, and they were just turning into Union Square when they came upon a vision of beauty that could not fail to attract marked admiration upon any promenade.

The lady in question, and who had drawn the exclamation from the colonel's lips, was a brilliant brunette, who, with superb carriage, stylish and expensive toilet, made with perfect taste, and worn as though a part of herself, was walking slowly down Broadway, enjoying the up-setting tide of faces, and apparently unconscious that she was the cynosure of all eyes, and drew behind her, as a ship does a swell in shallow water, half a dozen "curled darlings," all eager to know who and what the beautiful stranger was.

At the remark of Colonel Castleton, Burton Prince quickly turned his head and beheld before him a face that made his own flush and then blanch white.

Instantly he started toward her, as though to speak, a forced smile upon his lips; but the fire in those magnificent eyes, and the contemptuous curl of the beautiful mouth, checked him, and he held on his way, stammering forth to Brete Castleton, as he retook his arm:

"I thought that I knew her."
 "Her look showed you to the contrary. I wonder who and what she is; but I will find out, for she is doubtless some Southern beauty and an heiress."

"Excuse me, colonel, but I forgot to make a call I promised at the New York Hotel, so will have to return; will see you to-night at Mrs. Earl's if not at the Club."

"Yes, I'll leave the Club about eleven, and we'll go to the *soirée* together if agreeable," answered the colonel, while Burton Prince, professing fatigue, crossed the square to a hack stand and sprung into a *coupé*. Calling the driver to the door, he said:

"Drive slowly down Broadway until you overtake a lady in black velvet, and with an orange-colored plume in her hat; the handsomest and best-dressed woman on the street; then keep her in sight, but not so as to attract attention."

The *coupé* rolled away, and as it turned into Broadway Colonel Castleton crossed to the hackman, who moved up into the place of the vehicle just departed.

"You know the man that just drove away?"

"Well, sir."

"Then follow him, but do not let him suspect what you are about."

"All right, sir," and the Jehu closed the door, mounted his box and drove off, while the colonel leaned back on the cushions and said, with a sneer:

"Prince *did* know that girl, and she knew him; I'll see how this little game ends, or my name is not Brete Castleton."

In the meantime the driver of the *coupé* in which sat Burton Prince, soon came upon the object of his search, and whom he recognized readily from the description given him, and slowly followed until the lady suddenly turned to the rightabout, and unconscious, seemingly, of the staring eyes upon her, retraced her way with the same easy, graceful step.

Reaching Twenty-second street, the beauty turned abruptly off of Broadway to the east, leaving behind her a disappointed throng of admirers; but, at the distance of a couple of blocks apart, the two *coupés* followed her, though not so as to attract attention.

At length she ascended the steps of a small, but respectable-looking brick house, and taking from her pocket a key entered the door, giving one glance up the street as she did so, and her quick eye detecting the two carriages.

Standing in the shadow of the parlor curtains she watched, and, as the first *coupé* drew up at the door she said, simply:

"I knew he would come; but who is the other?"

As though to answer her question the second vehicle drove rapidly by, as Burton Prince was ushered into the hallway by a servant girl.

"Ah! it is the man I met in the prison, coming from poor Brandt's cell. Now to meet Satan," she said, scornfully, and listening, she heard the dialogue between her visitor and her servant.

"You say that Miss Helen Boyd does not live here?" he asked.

"She does not, sir."

"May I ask the name of the lady who does reside here?" and he seemed puzzled.

"Mrs. Burton, sir."

"Ah! would you kindly take my card to her?"

The servant did as requested, and soon returned and ushered the visitor into the parlor.

There before him, more beautiful and queenly than ever, stood the woman he had cruelly deserted, and her eyes were fixed upon him with an expression that checked his advancing step, and drove the deceitful smile from his lips, while in tones that were full of meaning she said, calmly:

"Burton Prince, we have met again."

CHAPTER IX.

FACE TO FACE.

"AND is this my greeting; Helen, after long months of separation?"

Burton Prince threw all the fascination of which he was capable into his voice and look, for he saw that he had a dangerous woman to deal with.

"You may thank my love of self, sir, that I do not meet you with a thrust at your coward heart," she said, passionately.

This new phase of her character fairly startled him, and he replied, quickly:

"Helen, you are unkind; you judge me before you have heard me."

"Bah! I judge you by your letter, which I still hold, as proof of your perfidy. Ah, Burton Prince, you have made of that timid country girl a woman with a heart of iron and nerve of steel, who has taken your advice, and come to the city, where already she has discovered her power; I have to thank you for much, sir."

He knew not how to take her words, and seeing now that this brilliant creature was about to escape him, he said:

"Helen, you have nothing to thank me for, but everything to hate me for; and I will not censure you, nor utter one word of complaint."

His voice was low and earnest, and in his looks there was pleading, for his vanity, not his heart, was touched, and he felt that with such a woman by his side in a drive in the Park, or upon his arm, in a promenade up Broadway, or in the box with him at the theater and opera, he could drive fashionable New York mad, the women with envy, and the men with jealousy. What sweet Berta Ivey would think he did not care; but the answer of Helen Boyd proved that she was rapidly becoming a student in the ways of the world, for she said, with biting sarcasm:

"Did I not know how black your heart is, Burton Prince, the mask of repentance and virtue you have on your face would deceive me; but, it cannot, for 'a burnt child knows the fire.'"

"You will doubt me, Helen, in spite of all I can say or do," and he grew nervous now, as he thought of this beautiful girl wholly from under his influence—perhaps his enemy.

"Doubt you? Yes, in everything; you are cruel toward women, and merciless toward men; for instance see poor Carl Brandt, who has gone to the penitentiary for five years for a deed of guilt which you committed."

"Great God! Helen, what do you mean?" and the man was livid now.

She broke forth into a ringing laugh, and answered:

"You are vulnerable, I see; but I will tell you what I mean, and, in your guilty soul, you will know that every word I speak is truth."

"When poor Brandt was at the academy with you, he borrowed from your bounty, a mere pittance to you, one hundred dollars, and, poor fellow, he believed that he owed to you a lasting gratitude, and when, through his nerve and skill, he saved your sister from being dashed to pieces, and received a clerkship in the bank, he little dreamed that it was to serve as a cat's paw for your crime."

"Helen Boyd, you shall not talk to me thus," the man said, with fierce anger.

"Ha! ha! a keen knife of truth will penetrate even the rhinoceros hide that envelops your heart, it seems! Oh, Burton Prince, why did you sacrifice that poor boy?"

"I repeat, I do not understand your insinuations."

"I will make them more plain; in a dress of deep mourning, with my face concealed by a long veil, I attended Brandt's trial, heard his confession of guilt, and *knew* that he was telling a falsehood, for some reason, but why, only one in that crowded court-room could understand besides himself; I heard your testimony of how you had counted that money, left it in the safe, and given the keys to Brandt, who often carried them over night for you."

"Well, he was sentenced, of course, and, I repeat it, the real thief escaped."

"Helen, I will not listen to such language from you, for you boldly imply—"

"That you, to cover certain heavy losses at faro, took that money, and laid your plans so as to have the blame fall on Brandt."

"Bosh! do you think any man would be such a fool as to sacrifice himself, become a convict for five long years, from some false idea of sentimental friendship?"

"I sacrificed myself, and will be as wretched as a convict, for all the years of my life, from a sentimental friendship for you, Burton Prince."

The retort hit him hard, and he looked down, but said, quickly:

"Helen, I hope you have not given vent to your wild ideas regarding my being guilty of purloining money from the bank, when you know that Brandt confessed to the guilt."

"I admit his confession; but why did he not confess what he did with the money? upon that subject he was silent."

"Oh, he has hidden it away to use when he comes out; had it not been for his pleading guilty and throwing himself upon the mercy of

the court, his term of imprisonment would have been much longer."

"It is long enough, God knows, and it will break his noble heart, I fear; but, now that I know you, Burton Prince, let me warn you to keep clear of my path, for I intend to dwell here now, and if you cross me in the slightest way you will regret it."

Another hope seized him, for he was now desperate, in the fear that she might spread abroad her suspicion and ruin him, and he said:

"Helen, do not let us part in anger—nay, more, let me again take you to my heart as my wife."

"Your wife! Insulter of that sacred name, did you not say that our alliance was a fraud?" and her eyes flamed upon him with scornful look.

"No, Helen, I wrote that letter to try you; you are indeed my wife."

"Great God! Burton Prince, injured as I believed myself, I would rather have it so than to be legally bound to such a one as you have proven yourself to be. Ah, no, not that, not that!"

He recoiled at her utter contempt for him, and really afraid to arouse her, he said:

"Then we are nothing to each other now, Helen?"

"Nothing."

"But you will need money, and friends, and—"

"Money I have, and friends I care not for: from to-day your path and mine sever, Mr. Prince."

She pointed to the door and he turned away with more of regret and sorrow than he had ever before known. A moment he paused, as if to plead again, but her look deterred him, and he left the house and drove rapidly away, while poor Helen threw herself upon a sofa and burst into a torrent of weeping, for then only did she tear from her heart the last trace of love she had felt for the man who had imbibed her whole life.

CHAPTER X. THE SOIREE.

TRUE to his promise Colonel Castleton was at the club punctually, and shortly after Burton Prince arrived, and a glance into his face told the keen-sighted colonel that his companion was not in the most enviable state of mind.

"Shall we go now, Burton?" he asked, rightly attributing his ill-humor to his interview with Helen Boyd.

"No, I wish to have a game first; will you play?" asked Burton.

"Assuredly, and win, too: there is a table," and the two friends, for so the world considered them, sat down to a game of cards together.

But, from the first, the young banker played recklessly, as though his mind was not on the game, and several glasses of brandy did not improve his humor, and, after an hour at the table, he arose impatiently, having transferred from his pocket to the colonel's a couple of thousand dollars.

"Better luck next time, Burt; now, let us be off, for it is late," and the two men left the club-house, called a *coupé* and were driven to the elegant mansion of Mrs. Earl, the wealthiest widow in the metropolis, so report said; at any rate, she was one of the handsomest, although she had a daughter of eighteen.

The world said the widow greatly admired Brete Castleton, for he was ever an honored guest at her house, and many predicted a match between them, though others, who knew the colonel well, said he would never marry, and there were more who thought that he made love to the mother on account of the daughter, for Geraldine Earl was a deserved belle in society, and an heiress in her own right.

"You are late, Brete," said Mrs. Earl, in a low tone, as she greeted the colonel, and then, aloud, she warmly welcomed the two gentlemen, saying to Burton Prince:

"I reserved a waltz on Geraldine's card for you, Mr. Prince; there she stands, with Mr. De Vigne."

"You always throw Geraldine in the way of Prince, Victoire," pettishly said the colonel.

"Well, is he not to be the richest young man in the city when his old father dies?"

"But, he is engaged to Berta Ivey; she is watching him, now, as though feeling herself neglected in not having had the first dance."

"She will not marry him, I am certain, for she seems to abhor a fast man, and the match was made by their fathers over their after dinner sherry."

"And you would have Geraldine marry a man you knew to be fast?"

"She will not know it, and, I tell you, Brete

Castleton, there must be some move made in this matter before another year, or those losses will be discovered."

"Ah! well, how would De Vigne do for Geraldine?"

"He has only a fifth interest in the firm, I learn."

"That is not inconsiderable, when the firm is worth millions; better take up De Vigne and drop Prince, for one is a clever fellow, and the other a reckless gambler."

"Like yourself, the latter, eh?"

"Oh, no, I play to win; but, who is that dark-faced man, yonder?"

"The one with Berta Ivey, now?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that is Basil Trevor, the artist."

"Indeed! he has won quite a name of late years, and his pictures are in good demand; but I bought a gem of his, at Goupil's, last week."

"He has the reputation of being rich, but I do not believe any one knows what he is worth, or much about him."

"We met him at Long Branch last season, for you remember he saved Geraldine from drowning in the surf, and we became quite intimate, and yet we knew little regarding him; in fact, he is a mystery to me."

"Well, keep your eye upon him, for your daughter loves him, my dear Mrs. Earl."

"Nonsense! how can you tell?"

"I saw a glance between them; now, look, he has gone over and claimed her for a dance without a word passing between them. I fear, Victoire, you are losing your perceptive powers, as age creeps on apace," and Colonel Castleton, who never danced, turned away to observe the different people present.

After a dance with Geraldine Earl, Burton Prince sauntered leisurely about the rooms until he met Berta Ivey, the lovely girl to whom he was engaged.

"Ah, Berta, I have been looking for you," he said, almost indifferently.

"I could not expect to be seen when Geraldine Earl was near," she answered, in a tone of pique, for, in spite of his faults, which she only heard vague rumors of, Berta Ivey loved the dissipated young banker, or thought that she did.

"Don't be jealous, Berta, for you know I am all your own," he replied. He knew the nature of the girl too well to arouse her jealousy, for, although he did not love her, he yet had made up his mind to marry her, as, outside of her beauty and lovely character, she would be a golden prize, and her vast wealth would fall into his hands at a most opportune time.

Just at this moment Geraldine Earl approached, leaning upon the arm of the artist, Basil Trevor, a man with a face as hard to read as Egyptian hieroglyphics; but, withal, a face of rare power and fascination.

"Oh, Berta, Mr. Trevor has a treat in store for us—but I beg pardon; Miss Ivey, allow me to present Mr. Trevor, the artist: Mr. Prince, Mr. Trevor."

Berta Ivey was glad to meet the famous artist, and frankly said so, and the gentlemen merely bowed.

"As Miss Earl has raised your anticipations, Miss Ivey, permit me to explain the treat in store," and Basil Trevor spoke in that quiet, easy way, that betokens the man wholly at home in society.

"I know you will join us, Berta," put in Geraldine.

"The treat, is simply a visit to the home of the great sorceress known as the Red Witch, where the past and the future can be read for you."

"It will indeed be a treat, at least to me, for I have nothing in the past to regret, and the future I do not shrink from," boldly said Berta Ivey.

"And perhaps your sister will go, Mr. Prince?" queried Geraldine.

"Ah, that reminds me that I was to present her regrets for to-night, as she is not very well; but I will answer for her going to see the Red Witch, as she dotes on such things; when will you start?"

"Tell her to-morrow afternoon, and that I shall assign Mr. De Vigne as her escort. Meet here for lunch at two, and I will get Colonel Castleton to drive us there in his four-in-hand, and we'll take the Witch by storm."

"Then I shall inform her of our coming, for it is said she requires several hours to prepare herself for the task of mind-reading," announced Basil Trevor, and he begged a dance with Berta Ivey, who readily consented, glad to avoid an engagement with a bachelor admirer who had been her shadow for several years, and also proud of the chance to waltz with the

famous artist; but it was dangerous work for Berta, for, that night, when she laid her head upon her pillow to rest, there was a doubt in her heart whether she really loved the man she had promised to marry.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RED WITCH.

UPON a bold headland, jutting out into the Hudson, then above the city of New York, but now within its limits, a small, white-washed cottage stood under the shelter of a rocky cliff.

From its small porch, sheltering the front door, a grand view of the majestic river could be seen for miles in each direction, with the lofty Jersey Heights upon the other shore, while, in the rear, the little house was only approachable by a narrow path leading around the craggy hillside, and branching off from the highway beyond, and about two hundred yards distant.

And in this home dwelt the strange woman known as the Red Witch, and who, a few months before, had appeared in New York, sought out the little cottage as an abiding place, and drawn attention to herself by an advertisement in the *Herald* to the effect that:

"Madam Zaidah, the East Indian Mind Reader, would make known the *Past*, and foretell the *Future*, to all those who wished to test her wonderful powers, and learn of that which was kept hidden from all mortals, not gifted with the magic art of reading the stars, and the signs that were stamped indelibly upon the human face and hands."

This advertisement readily caught the attention of many, and those who had listened to her words, and felt her strange power, had been deeply impressed, and believing that she was akin to Satan, had called her the Red Witch.

Upon the afternoon following the entertainment at Mrs. Earl's, an old negress sat in front of the cottage, smoking a long reed contentedly, and, though gazing out upon the beautiful expanse before her, seemed not admiring its beauty. At her feet crouched a huge, savage-looking dog, to whom "distance lent enchantment" in the minds of many a wanderingurchin, whose curiosity caused him to wish for a closer inspection of the domains of the Red Witch.

A few feet from the negress, and seated beneath the shelter of a scrub-oak, was an Ethiopian, deformed to such an extent that he seemed hardly human, for his head was the size of a giant's and his stature not more than five feet.

His mouth was large in the extreme, and his bead-like eyes were set away back under his shaggy brows; his legs were as short as a child's, and his arms as long as those of a man over six feet tall.

Both he and the negress were dressed in bright red flannel trimmed with black, and around their necks, upon their arms, and from their ears and noses hung gold trinkets and charms, from rattlesnake tails to cat's claws.

A parrot, a black cat, a devilish-faced monkey and a large snake, squatted and lying upon the ground, completed this remarkable picture, if we except a black caldron, hanging from Gipsy sticks, which was full of some vile-looking stuff, which, as it simmered over a slow fire, spread forth a delicious perfume.

Presently the dog sprang to his feet with a sharp yelp, and the negress and the dwarf at once turned their eyes toward the highway, where a stylish four-in-hand turnout had drawn up opposite the path leading to the cottage.

A few moments after there was a party of eight persons visible approaching the cabin, but the dog, as though content with having given his warning, lay down to rest once more, leaving it to the negress to welcome the visitors.

As they approached the party was recognizable as the one made up the evening before, only with the addition of Colonel Castleton and Mrs. Earl.

Slowly they approached, the artist, Basil Trevor, and Geraldine Earl in advance, and they soon came upon the strange scene in front of the cottage, when Marion Prince, who was with Harvey De Vigne, a handsome young man of twenty-eight, called out:

"What a picture for your brush, Mr. Trevor."

"No one would believe it real, Miss Prince; but now, to see the Red Witch, for this looks like the black one, certainly."

"Old Meg Merrilies in ebony," suggested Berta Ivey.

They were all now standing in front of the group of negroes, cat and dog, and keeping an anxious eye upon the snake and monkey; but not one of the strange family had taken thus far the slightest notice of the visitors, and Burton Prince called out:

"Speak to them, Trevor, for we will unanimously appoint you spokesman."

"The motion is seconded," cried Geraldine Earl, gayly, and all the rest called out: "And carried."

Bowing with mock dignity to his friends, Basil Trevor at once stepped forward and confronted the negress and the dwarf, and, to the surprise of his companions, placed his hands upon his forehead and turned around three times slowly.

The effect upon the blacks was like magic, for a cry broke from their lips, and the next instant they had thrown themselves upon the ground before the artist, their faces buried in the dust, while the strange pets, that heretofore had been so inactive, even to the loathsome snake, crept closer to the young man, and formed a semicircle around him.

With surprise, and even with awe, the visitors looked on, while Colonel Castleton whispered, so all might hear:

"Trevor knows their fetish signs and has won them over; see, they worship him."

The two Ethiopians now raised their heads three times, pressed their hands upon their foreheads, and again bowed to the dust, while the dwarf mumbled out some words in a hoarse voice, and struck the ground three times with his heavy fist.

Instantly the snake reared its head and hissed, and then slowly moved toward Basil Trevor, while the Ethiopians in a low, wailing voice began to chant, at the same time accompanying themselves by shaking bones together.

"Great God! it is their test ceremony! If Trevor's nerve fails him now he is gone," cried Harvey De Vigne, who, when a naval officer upon the African coast, had seen the strange worship of the natives.

Nearer crept the huge snake, until it reached the feet of the artist; but he stood unflinchingly, his hands clasped upon his forehead, while in dismay, and with white faces, all were watching the awful ordeal through which he had to pass.

"That man has a nerve of iron," said Colonel Castleton, in a whisper, and every eye was upon Basil Trevor, who joined in the wild chant with the negroes.

Once around the leg of the artist wound the reptile, and then he began to draw his shiny folds upward, while the chant grew louder, and the bones were rattled more vigorously together.

Up still higher went the snake, until his head was upon a level with the heart of Basil Trevor, and his loud hiss was heard above the singing, and the sounds that came from the lips of the Ethiopians might be called such.

Then the artist ceased chanting, and in his stead the dog took up the refrain, howling dismally, until a score of urchins, who had gathered in the distance, turned and scattered home in fright.

And next the cat joined in with sharp whines, the parrot croaked, and the monkey uttered yelping squeals, until it would have been a relief to have been transferred to the orgies of Pandemonium.

But, through all, Basil Trevor's nerve never failed, though had he glanced at the group of friends watching him, he would have seen how great was their torture, for Geraldine Earl had sunk upon the ground, almost in a stupor with fright; and yet none dare move now, or speak aloud, as Harvey De Vigne had whispered that it would be fatal to the brave artist.

And up still higher crept the loathsome reptile, until his open jaws confronted the face of Basil Trevor, and their eyes met; but the man held the snake at bay with his glance, and suddenly the wailing of the negroes and the noise of the beasts and parrot ceased.

A dead silence of a moment followed, presenting a horrible, sickening tableau, and then the reptile yielded to the greater power in the man's eye, and, uncoiling his slimy folds, dropped heavily to the earth, while the negroes now crept groveling to the artist's feet, touching their lips to them.

A word in their own language from Basil Trevor, and they arose and backed away, while, with a light laugh, the artist turned toward his friends, and, pointing to the door of the cottage, cried:

"Behold! The Red Witch appears before you!"

A woman stood upon the porch—a woman clad in a rich blood-red silk, which was trimmed from neck to skirt with natural flowers, of purest white.

Around her neck was a chain of rubies, and upon her arms were diamond bracelets, every gem glittering brilliantly in the declining rays

of the sun, while around her slender waist, serving as a belt, was a black snake, the hissing sound issuing from his open mouth proving that he was alive.

And, though thus strangely attired and adorned, the woman was more strange in face, for every feature was perfect, only her complexion was scarlet, as though stained with carmine, presenting a wonderful contrast to the braids of snow-white hair that were wound round her head like a crown, and held in place by butterflies, that had the appearance of being alive.

"Yes, Zaidah I am, and called the Red Witch; who are you, bold man, that has dared face the Evil Spirit of the Jungle, and unites in the forms of the Mountain Fetish?"

She stretched forth her hand toward Basil Trevor as she spoke, and her voice was strangely soft and musical.

The reply of the artist was in an unknown tongue; but it made an impression at once, for the Red Witch said, simply:

"Come! thou and thy friends; Zaidah gives you welcome."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE.

THE cottage, into which the woman, who called herself Zaidah, ushered her visitors, comprised four rooms, three of them small, and one large, which latter they entered, taking seats upon each side of a dais, in the center of the chamber, the ladies being placed upon one side, the men upon the other, after the old style in churches.

The dais was of black, and in the center was a red urn, out of which came a curl of blue smoke, emitting a fragrance through the room.

Having seated her visitors, the Red Witch said, in a clear voice, at the same time turning her piercing black eyes upon each one, as though to read their thoughts:

"Have you come here in mockery, or with faith that I can make known the secrets of the past, as well as prophecy what you will pass through in the future?"

"We come, oh, gracious Zaidah, in no spirit of mockery, but to know from thy lips, that which to us ungifted mortals lies hidden," said Basil Trevor, for, by common consent, he was left to answer the questions asked.

"Then thou darest not first learn what I can foretell by what I can reveal of the past?" said the woman, scornfully; but, with a reckless laugh, the artist answered:

"I dare do anything, fair Queen of Mystery, and you can lay my past before us like an open book; but, that I know, and would see, rather, what the future has in store for me; but first, let me consult my friends as to their wishes."

"We all know what has happened, so let us know what is to come," said Colonel Castleton, and the woman turned quickly upon him:

"By what I speak truly of your past, Colonel Brete Castleton, you may judge of my power of reading the future."

In spite of his self-control the man's face paled, as he exclaimed in surprise:

"You know my name then?"

"Yes, I know more," and without another word she threw herself down in front of the red vase, and instantly flames ascended out of its depths, while, in a sweet, wild voice, she chanted forth, rather than spoke:

"I see a home on England's far shores. It is a grand old structure, and two children play around its marble stairway. These children are brothers, and the title and wealth of an old name must fall upon one of them, the eldest; the other, the younger, must become an adventurer. Years pass, and a ship goes down at sea; but a boat lives through the storm, and in it are four persons; two are men, the other two are women, and the hearts of two are evil."

"Enough, woman! I have had sufficient of thy wild music in my favor," and, white and stern, Colonel Castleton arose from his seat.

Instantly the chanting ceased, and in her natural voice the Red Witch asked:

"Would Victoire Earl have me continue?"

"No, for the love of God, no!"

All were startled by the sudden, beseeching cry of Mrs. Earl, and turned upon her in surprise, while Basil Trevor came to the rescue with:

"Beautiful Queen of Mystery, there are two of our number who care not to know of the past, or the future, for they have arrived at that age when they have commenced descending the other side of the hill of life; turn then, I beseech thee, to those who stand upon the threshold of the future; that lady, for instance," and he

pointed to Geraldine, who, with a slight shudder, said:

"Yes, let me know the future, please."

"Would you have me recall the past?"

"Oh, yes."

"No, no, Geraldine, let the dead past bury its dead; tell her of the future, madam, for the past we know," said Mrs. Earl, quickly.

"The future then be it," and the woman again threw herself upon the dais, or altar, and once more the flames ascended, while in the same sweet tones she sung:

"Thou lovest, and he whom thou dost love is both brave and keen of wit, or else thou wouldst be defrauded of thy birthright, for thou hast bitter enemies."

"Thou wilt have joy and thou wilt have sorrow; but be brave, be strong, and thy enemies shalt not trample thee under foot, which they will do, if thou art weak and yielding."

She arose from her recumbent position, having finished her prediction for Geraldine, and her eye fell upon Burton Prince, and she said, softly:

"Shall I read thy past and present?"

He quailed beneath her look, but said, quickly:

"Tell me one thing of the past and I will answer you."

Again she dropped upon the altar, and once more her clear voice was heard:

"Burton Prince, beware of the future, for thy past didst begin in evil, for I read of an unholy love that began in a scene far from the strife of city life; but it has its toils around thee now to destroy thy soul."

"Hold! I would know nothing more, for I see that in my case thy art has failed," cried Burton Prince, but the color had gone from his face nevertheless, and her response made it livid, for she sung forth, without raising her head:

"Thy heart gives the lie to thy lips, Burton Prince, and the name of Helen Boyd is engraven on thy guilty soul."

Again did Basil Trevor come to the rescue, saying, quickly:

"Thou art a sad croaker, oh Queen of Mystery; let in some ray of sunshine upon us."

"Man and woman are alike; they clutch the sunshine and shadow of life as they please, for their own acts shape their destinies," was the calm reply.

"Tell me of the past, my friend," and Harvey De Vigne stepped forward, and once more she bowed before the dais and chanted forth:

"One thou lovest lies in a dismal cell: didst thou properly sift the cause that sent him there?"

"Great-God! she means Carl Brandt; he was found guilty of robbing the bank and confessed the crime."

"The name of guilt was spoken from his lips, but never written on his heart," sung the woman.

"Ah, a sin of the head and not the heart; thus many are led astray without intending wrong," was the answer of the young banker; and then he resumed:

"You are a wonderful reader, madam; now tell me of the future."

"There is a plot against you, and you are not what you seem, for there are wheels within wheels working evil that will affect you more than you can dream."

Harvey De Vigne seemed impressed by her words, and turned away as though he could not then hear more.

Stepping quickly behind the prostrate woman, for she had not raised her head from the velvet-covered dais, Marion Prince said in a clear tone:

"Who am I, madam, that addresses you?"

"The sister of thy most unworthy brother," came the quick retort, and the shot struck home, for Burton Prince breathed a curse half-aloud, while the Red Witch continued:

"And thou art more; thou art thy own true and noble self, Marion Prince, and so remain until the pall of death is drawn above thee."

"I thank you," and Marion Prince spoke in earnest tones.

At a motion from Basil Trevor, Berta Ivey hesitatingly approached.

"And who now stands by thy side, Priestess of Mystery?" asked the artist.

"One who has been offered as a sacrifice upon the altar of love. Let her shun the path traced out for her to follow."

Berta shuddered, involuntarily turning her eyes upon the man to whom she was engaged, and whom for the third time the Red Witch had given a thrust.

"Well, I alone remain, madam," and Basil Trevor knelt beside the woman, who said in a voice of deep feeling:

"With thee, Basil Trevor, I will let the dead past bury its dead; but the future thou canst make it what thou wilt."

"I thank you, and shall follow thy advice; here, in the name of us all, permit me to place upon this dais a souvenir of our coming," and he laid a handful of gold before her.

Instantly she was upon her feet, her burning eyes fixed upon him, while she cried:

"Keep thy gold, for the Idol of Mystery accepts not treasure from one who knows the Fetish faith. Farewell."

She placed the gold within his hand, and backed gracefully from the room, disappearing behind a heavy black curtain, upon which was embroidered in red a representation of Mephistopheles.

Impressed by their visit, the party left the cottage, the two Ethiopians bowing low before Basil Trevor as he passed them, and almost in silence they drove homeward, feeling in their own hearts that the woman was rightly called the Red Witch.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOST.

THERE was consternation in the home of Florette, for the girl hostess had suddenly disappeared, and her now numerous boarders lingered until a late hour around her door, waiting for her return, until compelled at last to go supperless to bed.

And breakfast-time came, and again the boarders assembled to wonder at her strange absence, and to talk over the cause.

"Guess she's been made matron o' some tony hotel," suggested Will Terrill, the cat doctor, a youngster of fourteen, as ugly as he was mischievous, and who had won his title of feline M. D. from the fact that he charmed cats to come into his grasp, and then bagged them. What he did with his captures only the Mercer street French restaurant-keepers could tell.

As Will Terrill had skulked around large hotels, in his legitimate calling, or "perfection," as he called it, he had frequently seen the "matron" of the vast *caravanserais*, and hence his idea that Florette had become the supervisor of chambermaids and scrub-girls.

"Guess she wouldn't go there, when she was doin' well here; she tole me she had laid up fifteen dollars," remarked Jicksey, who always desired to be considered on the best of terms with his fair hostess, and had already laid out a romantic attachment to be indulged in by him when he grew another foot, and added several more years to his age, forgetting that while still a boy, Florette would be a woman; but of this circumstance boys of thirteen, and boys in love seldom think, as all of us who have been boys, kind reader, well know, if we will for a moment recall our past lives.

"I'm a-thinkin' she's shook us, and gone and been married," prophesied Tip, and from long practice he dodged a blow aimed at him by Baldy, the Bulldog, who retorted:

"Married, yer grandmother! Why she's but a chick o' a child; you newspaper men is allus tryin' to git up some sensation to fool folks with."

"But the thought is worthy of belief, seeing as Florette is a female, and from the cradle to the coffin no one knows how to calculate upon a woman."

"I'll note it down in my book, and if Florette turns not up within the day, the world shall learn of her strange departure," and Professor Romeo Tannhamer took out his note-book and began to scribble, while the others, who admired genius, no matter how lowly, watched him with marked respect.

"You is all afther making fools of yez, standin' here with yer mouths wide open, when the poor girl is likely in trouble; out upon yez, ye spalpeens, for hungry vagabonds waitin' a feedin', when poor Florette may be this blessed minute at the bottom of the say," and Mrs. O'Gorman opened her door for the twentieth time that morning and faced them.

This time all seemed to feel that she advanced a new idea, and that perhaps Florette had indeed gotten into some trouble, or, what was worse, might be dead.

"Let's go an' look her up," cried Jicksey, and all seemed to be ready to start at once, when Professor Romeo called them back.

"Hold! spring not forth like hounds on a false trail, from joy of being freed from the grasp upon the collar, but have wisdom in thy search; for instance, the fair Florette was last seen after the mid-day meal, and she went forth, leaving with Mrs. O'Gorman her key; now, what member of our happy family, or in other words, that hither comes for hash, hast

not been seen here assembled for supper, or for breakfast?"

"The Italian, Pietro," called out Tip.

"Yes, he hain't been seen since dinner yesterday, and he were awful reg'lar at his feed," added Jicksey.

"Then who knows the abiding place of Pietro Avilla, the Italian?" asked the Professor.

None knew where he worked, though he had often been seen upon the streets, and, when not grinding an organ under a window, was supposed to be working in a piano manufactory.

A week only had he been a boarder with Florette, and he had quite won the admiration of his fellow-boarders by his fine singing after supper in the evening, when it was a habit for all to remain for an hour or so.

And he had spoken of Florette's voice, and said there was a fortune in it, while he seemed delighted to give her lessons in singing and upon the guitar.

One day he had strolled to the little boarding-house and asked to get his meals there, paying promptly in advance, and this was all that was known of Pietro the Italian.

Now he was missing, and so was Florette, and the boarders put their heads together and decided that the Italian had kidnapped the young girl.

"Our duty is plain, my friends; we must find Pietro the Italian, and force from him the truth; now, as thy duties call thee not to office and to desk, hie thee upon the search," and with a yell at the words of the Professor, Baldy and his youthful fellow-boarders started forth upon the trail to look for the lost girl, whom they had all become devotedly attached to.

And watching them from a window on the other side of the street was a man with dark face and fiery black eyes and a cunning smile upon his lips as he muttered:

"Americano people fools; no sense like Italiano; Pietro know what to do, and have mucha monee yet some time."

Without saying more he drew a false beard over his face and strolled leisurely out of the house, nearly running over Professor Romeo Tannhamer as he crossed the street, failing to recognize in the disguised individual jostling against him the man of all other men that he just then wished to find.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAUGHT IN THE TOILS.

THE day before the disappearance of Florette from her duties of "boarding-house marm," the Italian, Pietro Avilla, was sauntering along the street with his hand-organ, when he met a boy who asked him if he did not board with the sister of the convict, Carl Brandt.

"Yes, me liva there; what you want knowa for?" answered the Italian, suspiciously.

"A gentleman wishes to see you, and told me to show you where he is."

"Whata he want?" suspiciously asked Pietro.

"He has a job for you, I guess, and he looks able to pay," said the boy, who was one of that class who are ever in the street, though they have homes where their parents should keep them.

"Me goa; if he harma me, me will killa you," responded Pietro, whose conscience was not at rest, and consequently caused him to dread evil to himself for bygone crimes.

The boy seemed alarmed at the threat of the Italian, but having been promised a snug fee to go on his errand, he concluded to take the chances, and conducted Pietro a few blocks, until he turned into a hallway, upon the doorway of which was a sign which read:

"LOUIS LIVINGSTONE,

"ATTORNEY AT LAW.

"Special Business Attended to."

"Ah! me knowa him," assured the Italian, and he ascended the steps to the office without hesitation.

In his private office sat Louis Livingstone, a shrewd-faced man of forty-eight or fifty, and one well known as a lawyer greatly sought after in all criminal cases, for he could browbeat a judge, and deceive a jury by his wit and bombast.

"Ah, Pietro, I am glad you have come. Boy, here is your fee, and don't let me catch you hanging around my door again, or I'll send you up as a vagrant," was lawyer Livingstone's warning, and the frightened boy hastily left the room.

"Well, Pietro, what have you been doing with yourself since I cleared you of that murder case, which, if ever a man deserved to hang for, you did," and the lawyer smiled blandly,

as though he had paid his visitor a compliment.

"Me worka hard, make something to eata, lika honest man."

"Don't you find it hard to be honest, and kind of wish you had a little stroke of business that would pay a hundred or so?"

"Oh, yes! si, signor, me lika mona."

"What fool don't? Well, you are boarding with the sister of Carl, the convict, I see," and the lawyer referred to a book of addresses.

"Si, signor; she mucha good girl."

"Well, she happens to be in the way of some parties who have money, and I wish to see her, so give her this card and tell her to call to-morrow afternoon; and you be here, too, for I wish your aid."

"Me helpa you."

"Even to cutting a throat, if I ask it?"

"Monna are good; Pietro love monna," was the non-committal answer.

"I don't care to have you use that vile knife of yours, but I will tell you what I do wish, and you must have your wits about you so as to make no mistake."

"Pietro is not fool."

"So I believe; but now to business, for I tell you this girl must be kept out of the way, not killed, you know, but her identity destroyed."

"Me knowa; make Italian girl of her."

"Just the thing; but how, seeing that she is an American?"

"Me dye hair black; eyebrow, eyelash, too, and stain face; she make good Italian girl."

"Doubtless, under your care," dryly said the lawyer; then he continued:

"Make her what you please, only in some way keep her away from every one who knows her, or could find her out; now, how can you do this?"

"Me tella her brother want her to give up boarding-house, and goa with me, to sing; make mucha monna for him, when he come out prison; she hava fine voice, play guitar."

"Very well; I will urge it upon her, telling her that you are in search of witnesses who swore falsely against her brother, and that if she is supposed to be dead and her brother in prison, I can take steps to have all come right in the end, and her love for the convict will make her consent."

"Oh, yes, she do mucha for him; how mucha you give me?"

"I thought that would be the next question. Well, I am doing this for another person, with my fees my only personal interest, and I will find out to-day how much he is willing to put up for the job, and you shall know to-morrow."

"Me bea here; hava girl also," and the Italian took his leave, while the lawyer arose and paced the floor, muttering half aloud:

"I must get at the bottom of his motive for wishing to get rid of the girl, for it is a deep one."

"I wonder if he is really guilty of the robbery himself, and fears the girl knows him to be, and thus wishes to get her out of the way?"

"Well, I will fathom it out, or I'm less keen than I am said to be. Ah, Mr. Linwood! am delighted to see you," and lawyer Livingstone turned and greeted a young man who just then entered, and whose elegant attire and pleasant address did not hide the look of dissatisfaction stamped indelibly upon his otherwise good-looking face.

"I have called, Mr. Livingstone, to beg of you another loan," said the young man, hesitatingly.

"Ah, you are going it strong, Ellis; better let up, for pay-day is bound to come," remarked the lawyer, blandly.

"Pay-day has come, and that is why I come to you."

"It seems strange that one who has your salary, as Assistant Treasurer of the Apex Insurance Company, should need so much extra money to spend; you must gamble, Linwood, though it is none of my business."

"I do play an occasional game, sir, with Colonel Castleton, Prince and others; but I have other bad habits, which I need not mention, but which draw upon me largely."

"No wife, though before long I hope you will have; no one dependent upon you for money, or that is with a legitimate claim upon you, and yet spending an average of two thousand dollars a month! Why, Bella and myself were saying only yesterday, that you were going it rather strong."

"And how is your daughter, sir?"

"Oh, very well; but, why have you not been round?"

"I intended calling to-night; but can you oblige me with some funds?"

"How much do you want?"

"Five thousand for six months."

"Whew! you are going it strong; that is a large sum, Ellis."

"I know it, sir; but I suppose within that time my father will die, for he is getting very feeble, you know, and I will then have plenty of money," said the heartless young man.

"Oh, I know that the old man is rich, and that you are his heir, and I suppose I must oblige you, though I am a little short. Can't you take it out of the company's treasure-box?"

Ellis Linwood hesitated, and, as though divining the cause, the lawyer continued:

"Well, well, I'll let you have it, for I suppose it is to pay back what you have already borrowed from the company, you need this money for, so as to keep accounts square. Let me see, I have your note now for two thousand, due in ten days."

"I'll throw that in with the other, and, counting interest, will make it eight thousand for six months."

"All right; here is a blank, and here is your other note to tear up."

Ellis Linwood hastily filled in the note and signed it, when the lawyer said, casually:

"And your indorser?"

"Do you mean I must get it indorsed?"

"Oh, yes, merely as a form, you know."

"I'll indorse my father's name, as I transact his business, you know."

"Yes, I know, but, never mind his name—ah, I have it, just write the name of the Apex Company across it, and that will be sufficient."

"But, you know, the Chief Treasurer indorses for the firm, Mr. Livingstone."

"All the same, I will take your indorsement, and it will be only as a matter of form, for the note shall not leave my safe—there, that is right—thank you," and the lawyer placed the note away among his valuable papers, paid the money to the young spendthrift, and bade him good-morning, Ellis Linwood having promised to dine with him that day, for he had quite an admiration for Bella, the lawyer's very pretty daughter.

When the door closed behind his visitor, Lewis Livingstone rubbed his hands gleefully together, and said:

"Now, my reckless young millionaire, I have you in my power, and if you don't marry my daughter you shall wear a felon's suit, or my name is not Livingstone—ha! ha! ha! Robert Linwood, when the woman I loved twenty-five years ago, discarded me for you, I swore revenge, and I will yet have it, for you will be dead, your son will inherit your wealth, and marry my daughter, and then he shall go to prison, and his wife will have his wealth. Ah, Lawyer Livingstone, you are indeed worthy of the great name you have won," and the man smiled as sweetly as though he had just done some noble deed instead of plotted the ruin of a reckless young spendthrift, with more good looks than brains.

CHAPTER XV.

A CHILD OF THE STREETS.

BERTA IVEY sat alone in her beautifully furnished rooms, her thoughts none of the pleasantest, if one might judge by the frown upon her brow.

"Oh, why did I pledge myself to marry Burton Prince?" she exclaimed, impatiently, and rising, she paced the floor with slow, deliberate tread, after a moment, thinking half aloud:

"I did think I loved him; but it was only a girlish fancy, begun years ago, and, urged by the wish of my father, I have now promised to marry him; but, oh, what a lot will be mine—loving one man and forced into the home of another as his wife.

"But, dare I not break off this match? No, no, for my poor old father has set his heart upon it, disbelieving every report about Burton's wildness, and better his happiness than mine, for he has been a dear, noble parent to me. Hark! what a sweet voice! Can that be a common street singer?"

She stepped to the window and drew aside the curtain, when, upon the pavement, her eyes raised to the upper stories, stood a young girl singing, her hands crossed upon her bosom.

"What a beautiful face, and how sweet her singing, in spite of her accent," said Berta Ivey, gazing with renewed interest upon the songstress, who was dressed in the garb of an Italian peasant girl, while, just behind her stood a dark-faced man playing an accompaniment upon a harp, with a skillful and master touch.

And, still upward to the window floated the sweet strains, the girl singing with a pathos that was impressive, when she sung some touch-

ing ballad, and a *naïveté* that was bewitching when caroling forth a lively air.

Going to the bureau, Berta took a gold-piece, and, rolling it in her embroidered handkerchief, threw it down upon the pavement, the Italian hastily picking it up and handing it to the young girl, who slightly bowed her haughty head, and then turned and walked away, followed by her companion, bearing his harp.

Still watching them Berta saw a carriage roll up to the door, and from it descend a lady whom she did not remember to have seen before.

"Mrs. Helen Burton; who can she be?" she said, reading the tiny, gilt-edged card.

"I never saw her before, miss; but she asked to see you," answered the servant.

"Say I will soon be down. It may be Burton's aunt, of whom I have heard him speak," and, having arranged her toilet, she descended the broad stairway and glided into the parlors.

"Mrs. Burton, I believe," she said, politely, and the superb-looking woman before her fairly startled her, for never had she gazed upon a face so brilliantly lovely or a form so perfect.

"Yes, Miss Ivey, and I regret to say that I have not come upon a pleasant mission; but it is my duty to save you from future misery."

"Pray, madam, explain yourself, for I cannot understand," said Berta, trembling with a feeling of coming evil.

"In a word I will; take the warning of a woman who has loved unworthily and do not marry Burton Prince!"

"Ah! what know you of Mr. Prince, madam, that you give me such a warning?" and the maiden was tempted to resent the advice offered by Helen Boyd.

"I know that he is a man without honor; a gambler, a *roué*, and who will marry you simply to get possession of your vast wealth," responded Helen, firmly.

"This is a severe charge to make against Mr. Prince, and without proof."

"The proof shall be forthcoming if I am driven to produce it. Simply sever your engagement with Burton Prince, and if he asks a reason, tell him to ask one of me; then you will see whether I have spoken the truth. Good-by, Miss Ivey, and do not idly throw aside my warning!"

She swept from the room without another word, and her hand was upon the latch of her carriage-door when a gentleman stepped quickly forward and raised his hat, while he said, politely:

"I cannot be mistaken, for there is but one face in the world like yours."

Helen turned quickly, and her face paled as she recognized before her the man whose shot had saved her life and sent poor Edgar Monkton over the precipice of Lover's Leap.

"Yes, we meet again; I told you we should. Here is my card with my address; come and see me," and she entered her carriage with a smile of adieu that was bewitching, while the gentleman muttered:

"Who and what you are I shall soon know, my beauty, for I like not the secret I hold on your account."

Turning he ascended the massive stone steps and pulled the bell.

"Miss Ivey is in the parlor, sir; walk in, please," said the liveried servant.

"Oh, Mr. Trevor, I am so glad to see you. Be seated, and tell me who that beautiful woman is, to whom I saw you speak just now?"

"You ask this, and she just left your house, Miss Ivey? Why, I hoped to glean information upon that subject from you," said Basil Trevor in surprise.

"I never saw her until ten minutes ago, when she called upon an unpleasant duty; but are you in the habit of addressing ladies with whom you are not acquainted?"

"That depends upon circumstances, my dear Miss Ivey; but I assure you I do not know the lady, though I admit to having met her before, over a year ago, when I was visiting the mountains for a few sketches and rest; I managed to save her from trouble at the hands of a fellow she met, and she seemed most grateful, and there we parted, not knowing even each other's names, and this is my second meeting with her."

"And will doubtless lead to many more; but she is wondrously beautiful."

"She is, indeed; I would like to put her face on canvas," and his remark did not find favor in the eyes of Berta Ivey, for, to the same extent that she liked Burton Prince less every time she saw him, she loved Basil Trevor each time after seeing him, and it being really an

affaire de cœur, she had to drift along with the tide of her affections, let them bear her where they might, for hers was a nature to be swayed by love to either good or bad, and already was the gall of jealousy sending its bitterness into her heart.

After a pleasant visit Basil Trevor took his leave, and walked down Madison avenue, upon which handsome street was the home of Mr. Ivey, until he came to thirty-fourth street, into which he turned toward Broadway, to come suddenly upon a young girl and harpist standing in front of a handsome mansion, with which he was very familiar, for it was the home of Mrs. Earl.

Just as he touched the steps, the young girl began to sing, and her voice floated forth in melody that won the heart at once of the young artist, as she sung the stirring words of that well-known Italian air, "*Viva Garibaldi*."

As the song finished, Basil Trevor spoke to her, addressing her in Italian:

"You have a superb voice for one so young, miss," and he gazed with admiration upon the dark face, full of expression and beauty.

But she returned him no answer, and the harpist said quickly, and with a show of anger: "My daughter sings, signor, not talks."

Basil Trevor raised his arched brows in surprise, and retorted in Italian:

"With such a surly father, she doubtless fears to talk," and stepping forward he placed a dollar in the girl's hand, and turning, entered the mansion, the door of which had been opened by Geraldine Earl, who had seen him from the parlor windows, from where she had been enjoying the music.

"What a splendid voice, Mr. Trevor, for a young girl!" she said, after greeting him.

"Splendid, indeed; and it is a pity to see her a mere child of the street, when she has it in her power to become far more."

"There is certainly a chance for some of our rich philanthropists to do good, by taking her and educating her."

"Egad, I'm half inclined to do so myself," he answered, abruptly.

"Do you mean it?" and she looked him straight in the eyes.

"Assuredly; the girl has a voice, which, if properly trained, will make her a star on the operatic stage, and if, by expending a few hundred dollars, I could make her such, and bring happiness to her life, why should I not?"

"I see no reason; and you could marry her, and—"

"No, she is not my style; I was speaking wholly in a philanthropical view, Miss Earl; but come, let us drop the child of the street and speak of something else; do you know I saw a face to-day that I would give much to be able to put on canvas?"

"A woman's, of course," and Geraldine Earl felt a pang of jealousy in her breast.

"Oh yes; all men's faces are masked, for I do not know one who acts out openly just what he is, while, with women, I am more generous, as I think they are often themselves, and the face I saw to-day would be natural and itself, if some sorrow had not changed it."

"Ah! who was this wonderful being, may I ask?"

"That I cannot tell you; but she is a mystery which I intend to solve. By the way, I think Colonel Castleton has a remarkable face, a study, for, as an artist, I study expression and features, and all that they mean?"

"He has a face I would not trust; nor do I like it."

"Indeed! I thought to the contrary, for it is rumored that you are engaged."

"And Madame Rumor also connects your name and mine, Mr. Trevor, in the same way, so you can judge of the truth of both, from what you know regarding ourselves," and, though speaking indifferently, Geraldine felt in her heart a great pang of pain, for this man of splendid genius, this lion of society, had stolen from her her heart, with his fascinations and dark, handsome face.

Had she then been mistaken in believing that he loved her?

The thought was a sad one to contemplate; but, woman-like, she hid her misery and brought

"A smile upon the lip
While tears were in the heart."

CHAPTER XVI.

HELEN'S DISCOVERY.

LAWYER LIVINGSTONE sat in his office, looking over his accounts and making his calcula-

tions as to how much more money he made by dishonest, or "shady" transactions than by honest ones, and I regret to have to state that there was a much larger amount to his credit from the discreditable source.

"A lady to see you, sir," said his "foil," or man in the outer office, through which one had to pass to reach the great lawyer, and undergo the close inspection of the individual who sat on guard.

The simple announcement that there was a lady to see him was sufficient to make known to the lawyer that she had passed the legal sentinel, for had she not have done so, he would never have known of her existence, that Argus-eyed individual in the outer office being the judge as to whether she should be admitted or not.

Putting on his sweetest smile the lawyer turned to receive his visitor, although he could observe her from a looking-glass in front of him, which reflected the door opening into the room.

"Do I address Mr. Livingstone?" was asked in the sweetest tones.

"You do, miss; how can I serve you?" and the lawyer was amazed at the beauty of the woman before him.

"I will tell you, sir, and I hope that all I say will remain secret."

"Assuredly; a lawyer's clients' secrets are held as inviolate as his own," was the polite rejoinder, and the attorney winced at the quick retort:

"When gold holds the key, lawyers, like auction goods, go to the highest bidder."

This was a flank movement upon lawyer Livingstone which he did not expect, and even his face flushed; but he answered reproachfully:

"You are severe upon my profession, miss."

"We will not argue the point, sir, but come to business; I desire to get into my possession a young girl of fourteen, who is at present leading the life of a street singer, but for what motive I cannot understand, or find out, for in vain have I endeavored to hold conversation with her."

"Well, and you wish my aid?"

"Yes, and will pay well for it."

"Who is this girl—your daughter, or sister perhaps, as you look scarcely twenty?"

"She is neither, only one I would hate to have harmed in any way, for she has no protector."

"And you wish to become her guardian?"

"Yes."

"Where can she be found?"

"She sings in the streets daily, from Fourth street to Central Park, and is accompanied by an evil-faced Italian by the name of Pietro, I learn."

"Ah!"

"It was all the lawyer said, but the inflection in the word led his visitor to feel that he knew of the girl, for she asked:

"You know her, then?"

"I have seen her; she is this Pietro's daughter."

"She is not; I saw that girl and watched her face day after day during her brother's trial for robbing the bank of Prince & Co. and I recognized her when she sung in front of my window yesterday, in spite of her wig of black hair and stained face."

"You would make a good detective—Miss—Mrs.—"

"My name is Mrs. Burton."

"Thank you; you would make a good detective to penetrate that girl's disguise as you have done."

"Ha! you admit then that she is the girl and disguised?"

Lawyer Livingstone was again flanked; but, having betrayed himself, he said:

"I may as well admit that for some purpose, connected with her brother's imprisonment, the girl is kept in disguise; I think to look up testimony to clear him by a pardon."

"Nonsense! No testimony can clear him, when he has confessed his own guilt. The girl has been duped to make money for that villainous Italian or to be kept out of the way for some purpose I have not yet discovered; but I will yet fathom it, and get her into my possession."

"I can arrange that for you, Mrs. Burton, but it will cost money."

"Name the sum."

"One thousand dollars now, and a second thousand when the girl is in your possession."

"I can go and make known to the authorities who and what the girl is, and get possession of her for a few dollars."

"True, and thereby cause her to be put out of the way by those who now seem to wish to have her unknown."

"True; I will pay you the money; the entire

amount when you bring the girl to my address. Here it is."

"Very well, she shall be there to-night, and let me give you a piece of advice, for I know that the girl is wanted out of the way, even dead, so keep a close watch upon her!"

"You were then acting for the person who wished her dead, it seems—the tool of a murderer?" said Helen Burton (as she now called herself), in a tone of withering sarcasm.

"I saved that girl's life, my dear Mrs. Burton; but, as I told you before, the secrets given a lawyer are inviolate," and he bowed profoundly, to again shrink at another shot.

"And, as I told you before, I being the highest bidder, get the girl into my possession; but, so be it—bring her to me and I will have the money for you," and Helen swept from the room with the step of a queen, while lawyer Livingstone touched a bell, and said to the clerk who appeared:

"Send a dozen boys out to look up Pietro, the Italian street-singer, and bring him to me."

Then the lawyer sat down to muse, and the more he thought of Helen's beautiful face the more he admired her, and the more he feared her.

"She can be a beautiful devil, or an angel, just as she desires," he muttered, and then, turning once more to his papers he became engrossed in work until Pietro was announced.

"Ah, Pietro, I am glad to see you; how much money have you made with the girl in the two months that you have had her?"

"She singa good, and maka mucha monna."

"How much?"

"Three hundred dollar in two montha."

"Well, I wish to buy her from you, say for five hundred dollars, and you keep what you have made out of her singing."

"No, she gooda girl; keep her, and one day maka my wife."

"The devil you say! Make that little childish beauty your wife! Not if the court knows itself, my dear Pietro."

The black eyes of the Italian flashed fire, and he dropped his hand upon his belt, where he always kept a knife hidden in the folds of his shirt; but the act did not alarm the lawyer, who said, sternly:

"None of that, you cursed maccaroni-eater, or I'll call an officer and see if your neck don't stretch, with what I know about you. I tell you, I want the girl, and I will make it seven hundred, so that with what you have will be one thousand. Besides, I paid you a snug sum to take her."

"All right; giva me the monna," said Pietro, sullenly.

"Give me the girl, then."

"Me bring her," and the Italian left the office, and it was dark before he came back, and then he was alone.

"Where is the girl?"

"Me canna tell; she has gona from place."

"Pietro Avilla, I believe you are lying, and that this is a trick of yours; but I shall put the police upon her track, and if you have deceived me, I will make you dance in mid-air."

"Me no deceiva; girila gona," sullenly answered the Italian.

"All right; go and look for her, and if you have hidden her away, remember what I tell you," and lawyer Livingstone left his office in no amiable mood, called a carriage, and drove to the home of Helen Burton.

CHAPTER XVII.

JICKSEY AS A DETECTIVE.

For the first few weeks after the wily Italian had got Florette into his power, he kept an anxious watch for any person he thought might be dogging his steps, for he knew that he was suspected by the young girl's boarders of having kidnapped her.

He also went with her only through the more fashionable portions of the city, where he knew such individuals as Jicksey and Baldy the Bulldog never put in an appearance, and he was beginning to think that he had an easy life ahead of him, for he was paid for his charge of Florette, and her beautiful voice brought in considerable money, which of course he appropriated.

But there was one who accidentally came upon the young girl and her guardian one day, and from that moment he became their shadow, until he felt certain that in the dark-haired, dark-skinned Italian girl he recognized Florette, the sunny-faced "boardin'-house marm."

And this astute detective was none other than Jicksey the Bootblack, who was sunning himself, for a wonder, on the fashionable avenues and up-town cross-streets, when he heard a voice that caused him to stop and listen.

It was a childish voice, and yet full of pathos

and melody, and he knew it well for he had heard it often before, when Florette sung for her boarders after supper as was her wont, until Mrs. O'Gorman told her to "charge 'em extra for the music so swate she was afther give 'em."

Peeping around the corner, from whence came the sound of the voice and clear notes of a harp accompaniment, Jicksey saw with delight the evil face of Pietro Avilla, and then his eyes fell upon the girl, and he chuckled:

"It are thet durned Italian, and it are Florette, though he's got her painted up like a yaller nigger. I guesses I has made a discovery, and I'll hang to it."

So deciding he ran around the square and took up a position some three squares off, and thus he dogged their steps for the remainder of the day, until he saw a boy go up and speak to the Italian, who at once shouldered his harp and moved away, beckoning to Florette to follow.

"I guesses thar is somebody sick in ther house, an' ther music is disturbin' 'em; but ef it were me, I'd a-think it were a angel singin' to me," muttered Jicksey.

But as the Italian kept on down the street at a rapid walk, without stopping before any of the houses, and in front of him walked the boy who had spoken to him, Jicksey changed his mind about there being sickness in the mansion on the avenue, and volunteered, half-aloud, as he followed on:

"Guess they's sent for to play at a funeral or a day party, sich as these rich folks gi'n ther children sometimes; and I wish I was invited, ef cake were going to lie around loose, for somebody as I is acquainted with would eat it and thankee."

But Jicksey had again to change his mind, for Pietro and the young girl continued on down into the lower part of the city, and, watching from an alleyway, the boy saw them enter a tenement-house.

Having jotted down in his memory the number and locality he was about to depart and make his discovery known, when Pietro appeared alone, and walked rapidly away.

At once then did Jicksey come to a bold determination, and that was to go and find Florette, so he marched up to the door as soon as the Italian disappeared and entered the hallway.

"This heur hain't kept like our boardin'-house ust ter was," he muttered, as he ascended the stairs to the upper floor, having an intuitive knowledge of where he would find the object of his search.

As he reached the upper landing the thrumming of a harp reached his ears, and he went to the door from whence the sound came, and turned the knob, for knocking for entrance had been left out of Jicksey's education.

The door was fast, and stooping he saw that the key was not in the door.

"I might hev knowed it," he muttered, and he bounded away down the stairs and was soon at the shop of a locksmith.

"I wants keys and sich like to open my parlor door," he said, in a pompous way, to the locksmith, who, after asking him regarding the lock, handed him a number of keys, from which he selected such as he thought would do, adding to them a short piece of wire, which he skillfully bent.

"You seem to understand lock-picking, boy; you had better look out or it may get you behind bolts," said the man, eving the shrewd face of the youngster.

"I knows enough to keep out o' jail," was the laconic reply, and Jicksey deposited his earthly capital, thirty cents, and departed.

The keys failed to fit the lock, but the wire turned it, and Jicksey stepped within, and found it vacant; but the notes of the harp came from a further room, the door of which was open.

Seated at an open window, in her small, comfortable room, was Florette, no longer wearing the wig of ebony hair, though her face was stained to the same dark hue it had worn for months.

"Florette!"

With a cry the girl sprung to her feet, and turning, beheld the youth coming toward her.

Dropping her harp, she cried:

"Oh, Jicksey! how did you get in here, and where'd you come from?"

"I go to thet door yonder, and I are come arter you, Florette, so let's skip quick, or thet furren Italian will come back and chew me up."

"Jicksey, I cannot go," she said, sadly.

"Wal, I jist bet you kin, for who is goin' ter hinder yer?"

"Jicksey, I am here making money to get my poor brother out of prison, for I make so

much more singing than I did with the boarding-house; but you must go, for Pietro would kill you if he found you here."

"I said he would chaw me up, but he'll find me tough eatin'; but, Florette, has yer gone back on ther gang?"

"Oh no, and how are they all—Tip, and Baldy, and the professor, and—"

"They is all well, and we boards with Mrs. O'Gorman now; but they is all lookin' for you, for we suspected that Italian, as he's a bad man, and they say he has killed two men, and more say he kilt his wife, but they can't prove it, as the body wasn't found out, yer know."

"Oh, Jicksey, is this true?" cried Florette, turning pale.

"It are painful true, and he are makin' a fool out o' you, which are truer, for he hain't goin' ter help yer brother out o' jail."

"He says he will, and within the year, and I disguised myself this way, that we might act as detectives upon some people he wishes to find, and whom he does not wish should know me."

"Does he treat you kind, Florette?"

"No, and yes; he never lets me go out, except disguised and with him, and he locks me here; but I have plenty to eat, and he teach me how to play the harp, and also how to speak French and Italian."

"He are a glorious pard, Florette; who fingers ther duckits?"

"What, Jicksey?"

"Who pockets ther chink yer make?"

"Pietro keeps it."

"I told yer so! Come, Florette, I is not goin' ter leave yer here, so come home to ther ole boardin'-house, and you'll find things as yer left 'em, for we has all paid ther rent reg'lar; is yer going with me, or must I wait here for ther forrener ter stick his styletty inter me, for they all carries 'em?"

"I'll go, Jicksey, for I assure you, I have begun to doubt Pietro myself, and I am awfully afraid of him."

"I am dreadful glad you is. Whose g'itar are this?"

"Mine; that is, Pietro bought it for me to practice on."

"I'll tak' it in."

"Oh, no, Jicksey; it would be stealing."

"I hain't so pertic'lar; if he's goin' ter lose ther singer he mout as well lose ther music-box, so here goes; but come along, for my ribs is gittin' ticklish about the p'int o' ther Italian's knife."

Hastily resuming her disguise, and taking the guitar, as Jicksey urged it, Florette followed the boy out of her room, crossed the one where Pietro lived, and they were soon in the hallway.

Locking the door after him, with his wire, Jicksey led the way down-stairs, and they were soon in the street, and both breathed more freely, for they had expected each moment to run upon the Italian, over whose head the boy had recorded a mental oath to smash the "music-box," as he called the guitar.

It was just dark, and with bowed heads they hastened along until they turned into a street leading in the direction of Mrs. O'Gorman's.

Just then a carriage passed them, a head was thrust out, and then a sharp command was given to the driver, who came to a halt.

"They is after us, Florette—run!" cried Jicksey, and the two started at a rapid pace.

But the carriage rolled swiftly after them, and soon drew up at the curb near them.

"Hold on there, my children!"

It was not Pietro's voice they heard, and they halted, and a gentleman sprung out and approached them.

"Are you not the little street singer, the daughter of Pietro?" he asked.

"I am a street singer, sir; but not Pietro's daughter," she answered, firmly, unheeding Jicksey's nudging her to tell a lie and deny her identity.

"Ah! you are the one I seek; you are Florette Brandt?"

"I am, sir."

"Well, I have good news for you—I am an attorney; lawyer Livingstone."

"I knows yer now," said Jicksey, and he added sotto voce to Florette:

"He's a big lawyer, Florette, but awful sly; keep yer eye peeled!"

"To explain," said the lawyer, who had heard Jicksey's remark: "I will tell you that a lady called at my office, and desired me to look you up, saying she wished to have you live with her."

"By diligent inquiry I learned that you were the little girl I had often heard singing in front of my house, and I sent for Pietro to bring you

to me, but he said you had suddenly left his home."

"I did, sir; I suspected him of treachery toward me, and I fled with this boy, who is an old friend."

"He is a fine-looking boy, and will no doubt make a good man," remarked the lawyer, benignly, while Jicksey said quietly:

"Taffy!"

"Will you go with me now?" continued the lawyer, unheeding the remark of Jicksey, but more than ever impressed with him.

"What shall I do, Jicksey?" and Florette turned to her defender, who said slowly:

"I'd like ter get a squint at this leddy, and then I kin say."

"Then get into the carriage with me and drive to her home."

"Florette kin git inside, but I'll ride up with hacky, for I don't like ridin' in hearses until I are dead. 'Sides I wants ter see where I is being druv to," said the cautious youngster, and, with a smile at the youth's shrewdness, lawyer Livingstone handed Florette politely into the carriage and followed her, Jicksey nimbly springing to a seat beside the coachman, and the vehicle rolled away, once more en route to the home of Helen Burton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DISCARDED.

MR. PRINCE, the millionaire banker, went to his elegant home an hour earlier than was his usual custom, for he had a mission to perform, and one that was not disagreeable to him.

Going into his library and putting on his dressing-gown and slippers, he threw himself down in an easy-chair, and waited the coming of his daughter, for whom he had sent a servant.

Marion Prince was a lovely girl, a reigning society belle, and yet her heart was as pure and noble, as was her brother's false and hardened.

Though called a coquette, she was not a heartless flirt, and it pained her to refuse the hand of any man whom she believed really loved her for herself alone, and not for her money.

But, her heart was not her own to give, rumor said, yet, though many were mentioned as the lucky one, none knew exactly upon whom her preference fell.

"Father, are you ill, that I see you home so early?" she asked, anxiously, as she came into the library, and affectionately kissed him.

"No, Marion, I have come to have a talk with you, expecting that you would have company to-night. Now, tell me, frankly, who of your gentlemen friends do you admire most?"

"Why, father, what a question for me to answer, and I really am not able to give you a reply."

"Then your heart is not set upon one in particular, of all who visit you?" persisted the old gentleman.

"No, sir, of all who visit me, not one has a decided preference."

"Then, you will consider a proposal I have to make, in behalf of Ellis Linwood?"

"Ellis Linwood?" and Marion looked at her father, in amazement.

"Yes, he loves you devotedly, so he says, and, as he is well off, holds a good position, and will inherit a million, I freely gave him my consent to offer you his hand, especially, as he is a friend of Burton's."

"Being a friend of my brother is hardly a recommendation, father, as Burton's circle of acquaintances are not all desirable; but, outside of that, I will not consider Mr. Linwood's offer for an instant, as I detest the man's fast life, and have no respect for him."

"Oh, he's a little fast, as is your brother; but they will both soon sow their wild oats, and settle down to become ornaments to society."

"I doubt it in both cases, I am sorry to say; but, why do you wish me to marry, father?"

"It is the lot of women."

"Not of all, and I wish to remain here with you, for you are no longer a young man, father, and will need me by your side when the years go by; let me stay, please."

"Assuredly, child, I do not wish to force you into a marriage; I expected you would soon be caught by some one, and, as I looked upon Linwood as a good match, I gave you his offer; but I'll tell him you decline."

"Yes, I decidedly decline the honor of an alliance with a man for whom I have no respect," and Marion turned away for a moment, and then said, with hesitancy:

"Father, will you grant me a favor?"

"How much do you want, Marion?" and the old banker put his hand in his pocket.

"It is not money that I wish, sir; it is that you will be just!"

"How mean you, child?"

"With that poor man, Carl Brandt."

"That convict? He has his just deserts, now," said the banker, angrily.

"He is suffering imprisonment for a crime which I would stake my life he is innocent of," boldly said the maiden.

"Hoyty, toytty! what is this I hear?" and the old man adjusted his spectacles and looked fixedly upon his daughter, who stood the gaze unflinchingly, while she continued:

"I never believed him guilty at first, and when he refused to tell what he did with the money, I was convinced of it, though I could not fathom the motive that led him to say he had taken it."

"Now he is suffering as a convict, while the real criminal is at large, and I beg that you will use your influence with the Governor to pardon him out."

"No, no, girl; I will do nothing of the kind."

"Father, he saved my life."

"Ahem! I know he did, and I rewarded him all in my power, for he would not accept money for it—"

"Ah! I remember, you gave him a check for ten thousand dollars, and he returned it; why did he refuse that, and steal the same sum from you afterward?"

"Marion, you reason like a Philadelphia lawyer."

"I reason with justice, for I have weighed the matter thoroughly, sifting every point in the case, and I am convinced of his innocence; besides, he was not defended, simply pleading guilty and went to prison, while all the facts against him were brought forward; and more, father, he had a little sister dependent upon him, and although I have tried to find her I cannot, for I did not wish to see her left penniless, when I owe my life to her brother."

"No, the girl must not suffer, for she has committed no crime. Look her up and do what you can for her, Marion."

"You dear, good old papa; and will you let your heart prompt you to seek a pardon for the brother?"

"No, Marion, I will not do that; but call upon me for what you need for the child."

"If I bring you proof that Carl Brandt was not the thief, will you?"

"Of course, though he deserves to rot in prison for being such a fool as to lay a crime upon himself which he never committed— Ah! here is Burton."

"Not one word to him of what we were speaking," said Marion, hastily, as Burton Prince entered the room.

"Well, sis, have you accepted Ellis? Don't blush, for father told me of his offer."

"No, I would never marry a man like Ellis Linwood; one of his kind is enough in a family."

"Whew! hot shot from you, sis! but, I'll take it, as I'm vulnerable, having just received my walking-papers from the beauty and heiress, Miss Ivey."

His words brought his father upon his feet in astonishment, while a faint smile came over Marion's face.

"Do I hear aright, Burton Prince?"

"You do, sir; I called upon Miss Ivey to ask her to drive with me in the Park, and she declined to go, and begged to see me in the parlor, when she told me she had changed her mind about marrying me, and severed our engagement."

"This shall not be, for I will go at once and see her father."

"No, sir, you will do nothing of the kind, for her decision is irrevocable," and Burton spoke firmly.

"And she gave no reason?"

"Oh, yes, she said she did not love me."

"Nonsense! the girl don't know her own heart, and—"

"I tell you, father, Berta Ivey will never be my wife. I regret to give you pain, sir, for I know your heart was set upon this match; but I'll marry a girl who is even richer in this world's goods, and equally as pretty."

"Whom can you mean?"

"That is just now a secret, sir; but she will be worthy to be your daughter."

"I doubt it, sir," said the old man, testily, while Marion remarked, as she left the room:

"Brother, you know the old adage:

"It is best to be off with the old love, Before you are on with the new."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COLONEL'S PLOT.

A PARTY of gentlemen sat in a private room at the Sans Souci Club, engaged in a game of cards.

Upon the table were rolls of bills and piles of gold, showing that the stakes were large, and the winner was Colonel Castleton, whose dark face showed no sign of pleasure at his good luck.

The other three were also known to the reader, for it was Basil Trevor who sat upon the left, while Burton Prince was his *vis-a-vis*.

"Ah, luck is changing," coolly remarked the young artist, as he drew toward him the stakes, and he added:

"You seldom lose, I believe, Castleton?"

"I am very lucky in all games; I am so certain of my chances to win, that I'll wager a side bet that I end the game a winner."

"I take the bet, Castleton; what shall it be?"

"Five hundred; Linwood, hold the stakes," and the money was placed in the hands of Ellis Linwood, and the game went on, Basil Trevor still continuing to win steadily.

At last Burton Prince said with a yawn:

"I draw out, for I'm broke for to-night."

But the other three continued to play on until Ellis Linwood, having lost all he had with him, remarked:

"As Mr. Trevor seems to have a sleight-of-hand style of playing that always wins, I will also draw out."

"I do not understand your remark, sir," and the artist looked the speaker straight in the face.

"Is your mind so obtuse that I must explain?" was the insulting reply, for Ellis Linwood had been drinking deeply.

"Ah! You meant to insult me, I see," and rising quickly, Basil Trevor dashed his hand into Linwood's face with a force that sent him reeling upon the floor, while Colonel Castleton and Burton Prince sprung to their feet in alarm at the sudden *fracas* that had been precipitated upon them.

Rising to his feet Ellis Linwood seized a chair and started toward Basil Trevor; but the artist's cool tones checked him.

"I warn you off, Mr. Linwood, for I am armed."

He had not risen from the table, and seeing that his adversary had checked his intention to attack him, remarked, indifferently:

"Shall we continue our game, Colonel Castleton?"

"Oh yes; but I sincerely regret this unfortunate affair."

"So do I; but Mr. Linwood should not have insulted me."

"Mr. Trevor, you shall answer for this," cried Ellis Linwood, who stood apart with Burton Prince.

"You are the judge of that, sir, and I am at your service wholly."

A few words passed between Ellis Linwood and Burton Prince, and then the two left the room together, but the latter soon returned with a formal challenge from Mr. Linwood.

"Tell Mr. Linwood that I accept his challenge, and will meet him at sunset to-morrow evening upon Sandy Hook, near the old Light-house."

"I know the spot well; permit me to place my yacht at your service," said Colonel Castleton, bowing to Basil.

"Thank you, I will accept your kind offer, sir."

"And your second, Mr. Trevor?" asked Burton Prince.

"Is it asking too much of you, my dear colonel, to oblige me in this affair?"

"Assuredly not, Trevor; I will be only too glad; what is your choice of weapons?"

"Pistols, ten paces," and Basil Trevor went on with his game, while Burton Prince returned to make known to Ellis Linwood the arrangements agreed upon.

For another hour the game continued, and Colonel Castleton looked at his watch.

"It is ten o'clock, Trevor, and you still win, so I yield our side beat, for I have an engagement to go up to Mrs. Earl's."

"And I promised Miss Earl I would drop in during the evening, so suppose we go together?"

"With pleasure; but let us have a bottle of wine first."

The wine was ordered, a carriage sent for, and the two men were soon set down at Mrs. Earl's residence.

They were greeted pleasantly by mother and daughter, and while Basil Trevor led Geraldine to a sofa, Mrs. Earl conducted the colonel to the furthest end of the back parlor, but took a seat where they could observe the young people.

"I tell you, Brete, Geraldine is getting too deeply interested in that artist; I see it more every day," said Mrs. Earl, anxiously.

"Well, I promised you I would put an end to it, and I have taken steps to do so."

"I am glad to hear you say so, for if she marries you know I am accountable for her property, and that sum drawn from the bank must be returned, and I could not raise it, as you know."

"Nor could I; but I tell you I have a plan laid to stop this love affair, and put her in mourning for a year or more, by which time we can arrange to get the money."

"Put her in mourning! In Heaven's name what do you mean, Brete Castleton?" cried the woman.

"Why, I was playing cards with Trevor, Prince and Linwood to-night, and as the artist won heavily, in spite of my 'tricks of the trade,' you know, I wrote on a slip of paper and handed it to Ellis, asking him if he did not think he was being cheated."

"He caught the bait, withdrew from the game, a heavy loser; and, full of wine, he insulted Trevor, who promptly knocked him down, as I knew he would."

"Oh, Castleton, will you never be done with bloodshed?" and Mrs. Earl shuddered.

"You wrong me, Victoire; it is Ellis Linwood who is to shed the blood, for you know he is a marvel as a shot."

"Yes, I have heard that his aim was something wonderful; well, a duel is to follow?"

"Of course, for it is all arranged."

"But is not Trevor a good shot, too?"

"I have never heard so, though he may be, as he has knocked around the world a great deal; but Linwood must take his chances as to that."

"Ah me, what a sensation it will create, and could we not manage to spread the rumor that the duel was about Geraldine? It would give her tone, you know."

"Yes, such a rumor can be circulated; but hear that fellow's light laughter! He seems to have forgotten that he is to face death to-morrow," and the colonel showed some surprise.

"He is as cool as though it did not trouble him in the least; but what if he should kill Linwood? Why, he'd be a greater hero than ever in Geraldine's eyes."

"No, she would regret it, for she is a noble girl, whatever her mother may have been."

"And who made me the— But we will not recall the past, Brete Castleton; I asked you regarding the result, should Trevor not be killed?"

"Oh, then I shall take him on a cruise for his health, and should he be lost at sea, you know, the world would call it a Divine retribution for fighting a duel."

"It seems a pity; but crime must be hidden y crime, I suppose; but Trevor is rising to go, and I have not the courage to bid him good-night, so pray excuse me to him," and Mrs. Earl hastened from the room, while the colonel, with the utmost *sang froid*, walked forward and joined Geraldine and Basil.

"Ah, Trevor, you going?"

"Yes, but do not let me carry you off."

"No, I am also leaving, for Mrs. Earl excused herself upon the plea of a headache."

"Mamma ill? Then I must hasten to her," said Geraldine, and her visitors hastily took their departure.

"Will you let me drive you home, Trevor?" asked the colonel, as they reached the carriage.

"No, thanks; set me down upon Madison Park, and to-morrow breakfast with me at ten, and I'll be ready to start to Sandy Hook."

"I'll be there."

Arriving at Madison Park the driver drew up, and Basil Trevor alighted, bidding the colonel good-night; but hardly had the vehicle rolled around the corner before Brete Castleton called a halt, sprung out, and catching sight of the artist hurrying toward Twenty-second street, followed swiftly on after him.

"Ah! he goes to her home; he knows her, too!"

"Now, who can she be? Bah! I will yet trace out her career, although I have been baffled thus far in my attempts, only discovering that her name is Helen Burton, and that her beauty and style on Broadway have won her the name of 'The Princess';" and, disappointed at being baffled, Colonel Castleton, the arch plotter, and himself man of mystery, returned to his bachelor quarters at an up-town hotel.

CHAPTER XX.

FLORETTE RECEIVES A LETTER.

WHEN Florette arrived at the home of Helen Boyd, and entered the neatly-furnished parlor, with lawyer Livingstone and Jicksey, she thought that it would be delightful to live

there, if the one who had sent for her was only a pleasant person.

A moment after Helen Burton entered the room, and seeing Florette, her face flashed with pleasure, causing her wonderful eyes to sparkle, and almost dumfounding the lawyer with her beauty, while the girl seemed at once drawn toward her, and Jicksey remarked, in a loud whisper:

"She's ther boss, Florette; too pretty for nuthin'."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Livingstone, and delighted that you have brought my little girl, for you will be my child, will you not?" and Helen drew Florette toward her affectionately, and catching sight of poor bare-footed Jicksey, who was turning his hat on his finger, which he had run through a hole in the crown, she asked: "And who is this?"

"Oh, I hain't nobody in particular, missus; only a boy," was Jicksey's remark, looking at Florette, who said:

"He is a friend of mine and of brother Carl; he took me away—"

"Yes, madam," quickly interrupted the lawyer, finding that Florette was treading on his toes; "yes, madam, this youth is one who has served me well in getting Florette out of that Italian's hands, and I intend to make him a clerk in my office—hey, Jicksey?"

"A healthy clerk I'll make," suggested the youth.

"And will you give up the wild life you live in the street, my child, and live with me, for I am an old friend of your brother Carl; we knew each other when he went to college in old Connecticut, and many a stroll we've had together upon the banks of the Housatonic."

"Knew brother—at college—Connecticut—on Housatonic—ahem!" muttered lawyer Livingstone, making mental notes of what Helen said.

"Yes, if you wish me to come, for I love you even before I know you," Florette answered, honestly.

The tears came into Helen's eyes, and to hide them, she turned away, asking the lawyer to follow her into another room.

"I tell you, Florette, this are a jam-up place, and she are a screamer, you bet! but, did you hear that old liar say I was ter be his clerk? Why, he'll bounce me on the end o' his boot soon as he strikes ther outside."

"No, Jicksey, I will ask him to look after you," encouraged Florette, who had not lost all trust in human nature.

"Nary! I kin look after myself; but I wonder ef I'll ever see yer, now you is goin' ter be a highfalutin' lady?"

"If she were to refuse to let me see you, Jicksey, I would not stay here."

"Bully for you! But, here they comes, an' the squire looks as tickled as though he'd swallowed a feather."

"Jicksey, my boy, we must be off, for Florette has a good home now."

"Oh, madam, can Jicksey come to see me sometimes?" asked Florette.

"Certainly; and here is something for him to buy him a suit of clothes with," and Helen handed the boy a bank-note.

"Can't wear clothes, less they's been wored afore, missus, as I don't feel comfortable in 'em, and I might be mistook for a Sunday-school softy, which I isn't."

"Oh, yes, he'll dress up nicely," decided Florette; and the lawyer having told Jicksey that no one must know where the young girl was living, the two departed.

"Now, my boy, come to my office to-morrow, and I'll give you work to do."

"What ter do?" asked the cautious Jicksey; "I hain't no book-l'arnin'."

"All right; I'll make you my office-boy, and little detective when necessary, for I see that you are a shrewd youngster."

"Guess I oughter be; I'd starve ef I wasn't sharp, and t'other boys would chaw me for gum."

"Then you will come in the morning?"

"I'll be ther, esquire, ef I bu'st a suspender," and Jicksey lounged away, contented with the world at large, and himself in particular; but he uttered no word at Mrs. O'Gorman's of having seen Florette, though she was, as usual, the subject of conversation among the boarders, and promptly the next day he reported at the office of lawyer Livingstone, and, two hours after was most uncomfortable, in a new suit of clothes, a clean face and combed hair, for he remarked, *sotto voce*:

"Now hain't I a healthy snoozer! All I needs ter make me a Sunday school softy are a catechism."

But, Jicksey stuck to his work, and as days went by, found his duties not unpleasant, while,

in her new home, Florette found almost happiness, for with her brother in prison she could not be wholly happy.

But one day another cloud swept across her young life, for in receiving the letters from the post-office one afternoon she found one addressed to her.

Helen was absent, and going to her room Florette broke the seal and read as follows:

"NEW YORK, Wednesday.

"TO FLORETTE BRANDT:

"Feeling a deep interest in you, I write to say that you are in the power, and under the protection of your worst enemy, and one who has proven your brother's bitterest foe—I mean none other than the woman known as Mrs. Helen Burton.

"A country girl, endowed with wonderful beauty, she won your brother's heart, when he was at college near her home, and then cast him aside for better game—a rich student, little caring for the sorrow she gave to poor Carl Brandt.

"Coming to New York she got your brother again in her toils, and it was to give her money she demanded that made him rob Prince & Co., and then in his distress she cruelly deserted him, and he lies in prison for a crime committed for her.

"Do not think that remorse caused her to take you under her protection; she had a deeper motive—to rear you up like a lady and then sell you to the highest bidder.

"Now, little girl, you know Helen Burton with her mask removed, and you had better fly from her presence as you would from a pestilence, for better a child of the street than become what she will make you.

"If you need proofs of what I have written, lawyer Livingstone can give them.

"Hoping you will heed the advice of one who would willingly serve you, but cannot, believe me

"YOUR FRIEND."

With white face and throbbing heart Florette read this strange letter twice over, and then, urged by some sudden impulse rushed from the room hurriedly.

Five minutes after she was walking swiftly along the streets in the direction of the office of lawyer Livingstone.

A knock, and the door was opened by Jicksey, across whose face broke a broad grin at sight of his old "boarding-house missus," as he was wont to call her.

"Lordy, Florette, you give me ther jim-jams coming so suddint on a feller," he said, and then noticing her pale face and seeing that she was troubled, he continued:

"What is the matter? Hain't things working right?"

"No, Jicksey, and I have come to see Mr. Livingstone."

"He is engaged jist now, with one o' our clients; but your case shall be attended to soon; walk in, miss, and have a seat by my desk," and feeling his importance before his fellow-clerks, and shoving a pen behind his ear, Jicksey escorted Florette to a seat near his desk, and leant forward in a very confidential way, to drive his companions wild with envy at his entertaining a very pretty girl.

"Now, Florette, tell me what is the matter?" said Jicksey, with all the dignity lawyer Livingstone could have put on.

"Well, I am going to leave Mrs. Burton forever, Jicksey."

"Leave that grand place! and whar will yer go, Florette?" asked the law student, in surprise.

"Into the streets once more," was the bitter reply of the young girl.

CHAPTER XXI.

ANOTHER TRAP SET.

THE person in the inner office of lawyer Livingstone, at the time of Florette's call, was a gentleman whom the attorney let out by a private door.

But hardly had the lawyer closed the portal behind his visitor when a cunning and avicious smile broke over his face, and throwing himself into his easy-chair, as was his wont, he talked to himself, half-aloud:

"Well, well," he muttered, "I am making money out of this child, and if, as the one who just left says, she and her brother are to inherit a large property, why, I'll adopt the girl myself, and thereby get a finger in the golden pie.

"Let me see: after the letter I wrote her, she has sense enough to leave Mrs. Burton, and will doubtless come to me. A clever dodge that of mine, running up to Connecticut to find out the antecedents of that beautiful woman and this Carl, the convict, and I hope Florette will catch the bait; but, as she is now an heiress, I will not return her to this beautiful Helen Burton for the reward I know she would offer, but keep her in my own care until I silt this matter about the inheritance; and he offers a large sum to find her, that he may send her to school

and get the credit of being her guardian, and then marry her, so as to get control of her property. Well, we shall see, we shall see, for, if the estate is worth what he says it is, why, I'll marry her myself; yes, by Jove, I'll marry her myself, for I am not a bad-looking man, yet under fifty, and beautiful wards have married handsome old guardians, for I have heard of such cases.

"But now, let me see what is best to be done? Ah, I have it; if my letter does not bring the girl I will send Jicksey after her, and take her to my home in the country, where I will put her under the care of a fashionable governess; then I must get money from my two esteemed clients who wish her, to search for her, and take good care that cursed Italian does not find her, for he is on the search day and night; by the way, I guess I'd better lay a trap for him to fall into and have him hanged for that first murder he committed, and that will end his career.

"Now to send that queer youth after Florette," and the lawyer touched a bell and Jicksey appeared in answer to the call.

"Ah, Jicksey, I wish you to go on a particular duty—to see Florette privately, and—"

"She is here now."

"And alone?"

"Yes; she wants to talk law to you."

"Show her in at once— Ah, my child, be seated and tell me how I can serve you?"

"Mr. Livingstone, I have received a letter that has made me very unhappy, and I have left Mrs. Burton's."

"No, no, left that lovely lady's home, and why?" asked the lawyer, in well-feigned surprise.

"This letter will explain," and Florette watched his face as he pretended to read, what he himself had sent to her.

"This is surprising, indeed; who could have known these facts?"

Florette was remarkably intelligent, and her experience in life had made her sharp-witted, and, at once, she caught at his remark:

"They are facts then, sir?"

"Ahem! well, now, that is a hard question to answer, for, you know, a lawyer's secrets are never to be told, and—"

"Never mind, sir, I have found out what I would know, and I thank you; but, I am surprised that you would wish to place a young girl in the protection of one who had brought ruin upon her brother."

The lawyer winced under this shot, but answered, quickly:

"I believed that remorse had prompted her to care for you."

"Well, she need not trouble herself, for I can look out for myself, and, as I have been twice led into a trap, I will know how to avoid them, now."

"But, you are not going again alone into the world, my child?"

"Oh, yes; for I have no one to care for me—I am a poor child of the street," and the tears came into her eyes.

"Florette, my dear girl, I will not let you go forth alone in the world, for I have a comfortable home, and a beautiful daughter, who will welcome you as a sister."

"No, no; I cannot be a care upon you, sir."

"But, you will be no care, and I will make a fine lady of you—now do not say nay, for you shall be my little ward, and go out from this wicked city to my beautiful country-home, where you can hear the singing of the birds, see the green fields, and wander in the woods gathering wild flowers."

The man spoke in a manner of sincerity, and the picture he drew called back to Florette the happy home she had known in the past, when her parents were living in the country, and, thus tempted, the child-woman of fifteen fell into the third snare set for her.

"Oh, sir, I would be happy there, I know; only I am afraid I would be a trouble to you," she said, eagerly.

"No; on the contrary, you would be a great pleasure. Now, come with me out of this side door, for even Jicksey must not know where you are, for Mrs. Burton will make diligent search, and that Pietro is looking for you, too. Come, I will drive you home and introduce you to my daughter."

Leaving the office by the private door, lawyer Livingstone descended to the street, and, calling a carriage, the two entered it, and were driven rapidly away up-town; but, the vehicle and its occupants had been seen by one whom the lawyer would have given much not to have been observed by, for it was Pietro, the Italian.

"Ah, he foola me; but, me no foola; me

tracka him and geta girl for self; she singa so sweet, and maka monna for poor Pietro."

Having given vent to his determination, the Italian ran across the street to a hack-stand, and, shoving a bill into a coachman's hand, bade him rapidly follow the vehicle in which was the lawyer, and which was now a couple of blocks away.

Having seen the lawyer and his charge set down at the elegant home of the former, the Italian drove away, seemingly satisfied that Florette would not immediately leave the mansion.

But, an hour after, there returned to the neighborhood a totally different looking personage from Pietro Avilla, though the eye of a detective might penetrate the disguise, and behold beneath the false beard he wore the evil face of the Italian musician.

For more than an hour he lounged about the locality, until darkness came on and the street lamps were lit, and then his patience was rewarded, for a carriage drove up to the door and three persons came out of the house and entered it.

Rapidly the vehicle rolled away, but the fleet-footed Italian kept pace with it until he caught a passing hack, and turning the driver about he followed the ones he so persistently tracked.

At the Hudson river depôt both vehicles drew up, and, ten minutes after, lawyer Livingstone, his daughter, and Florette, were flying along into the country.

But in the same car with them sat Pietro, the Italian, an evil light in his wicked eyes, as he muttered:

"Girila go witha me, or me killa her."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DUEL.

AFTER a breakfast, which he seemed to greatly enjoy, Basil Trevor drove with Colonel Castleton down to the pier, off which lay the pretty little schooner yacht, on board of which the colonel passed a great deal of his time, for he was a celebrated yachtsman.

Spreading her white sails, the Cloud, as her owner had named her, flew swiftly down the harbor, and passing through the Narrows, cut through the swell of the lower bay, where another pleasure craft, a sloop-yacht, was visible, heading toward Sandy Hook.

"That is Prince's yacht, and he and Ellis Linwood are on board; they must have driven down from New York, and embarked at the fort pier," declared Colonel Castleton, looking at the graceful sloop through his glass.

Basil Trevor glanced with almost indifference at the other vessel, and then turned his eyes seaward, as though enjoying the view of the snow-capped waves, wholly forgetting the deadly mission upon which he was bound.

Swiftly the two pleasure crafts glided along, drawing nearer and nearer to each other, until they sailed abeam, and not half a cable's length apart.

Colonel Castleton and Basil Trevor raised their hats politely, as they saw upon the sloop's deck Burton Prince, Ellis Linwood, and a gray-haired gentleman whom they recognized as a distinguished physician of the city.

The salutes were politely returned, and, as the Cloud forged ahead, being the fastest sailer, the colonel remarked:

"Linwood has come prepared, although he is the best shot in the city, for he has brought Doctor Herrick along, I see."

"He was wise," was the laconic answer, and yet Basil Trevor did not speak in a boastful tone; but his remark caused the colonel to feel that a man who showed such utter indifference outwardly, must be confident of his own powers to face and conquer any danger he might meet.

Running into the Horse Shoe of Sandy Hook, the Cloud leading the way, the two yachts dropped anchor, and immediately after a boat from each put off for the shore.

"Let us take the sea side; there will be no one to disturb us there," said Burton Prince, as the parties met upon the land, and, crossing the cedar covered neck of land they reached the sandy beach, upon which the heavy surf of the Atlantic fell with monotonous roar.

The sun was near the western horizon, a few vessels were far out upon the blue waters, and a Southern-bound steamer nearer shore, while landward a bird in a cedar near by trilled merrily, the sound of the waves playing a deep basso profundo accompaniment.

But that little group of five men regarded not the beauty of the scene, for they had come there to mar its quiet by deadly combat.

With his cane Ellis Linwood traced letters in the sand, and watched the waves wash them

out, while upon his face was a smile of confidence, as he glanced at Basil Trevor, standing apart, and gazing seaward, in the same indifferent manner he had shown on the trip down to the Hook.

The surgeon had lighted a cigar, and was complacently laying out his glittering instruments in a convenient place, and spreading a shawl upon the sand for the one who might be dead, or wounded, within ten minutes, with an indifference born of long experience with pain and death.

Together stood Colonel Castleton and Burton Prince, arranging the preliminaries, and apart, with anxious, excited faces, stood four seamen from the yachts, ordered there by the colonel at a thoughtful suggestion of Basil Trevor, and at their feet lay a litter, to bear back the one who should fall in the meeting.

"We are ready, Mr. Trevor," and Colonel Castleton approached his principal, while Burton Prince walked toward Ellis Linwood.

"And so am I; ten paces, I believe?"

"Yes, and I need not tell you that Linwood is a quick and dead shot."

"So I have heard," and Basil Trevor took the pistol handed to him, glanced at it carefully, and walked to his position, as Ellis Linwood did the same.

"Colonel Castleton, as my pistol has not been used for some time, you will pardon me if I fire it off, and ask you to kindly reload it for me," and Basil Trevor wheeled, glanced over toward the cedar, where the bird still sung, thirty paces distant, and raising the weapon quickly pulled the trigger.

With the report the songster fell dead from the limb, and a cry of admiration broke from every lip at the magnificent shot; but Ellis Linwood turned deadly pale, for, confident of his own unerring aim, he had not, up to that moment, dreaded the meeting.

"A crack shot that, Trevor," said Colonel Castleton, and he added mentally:

"He doubts me, that is evident, and believed I had left the bullet out. Poh! I don't care whether he kills Linwood or not, only Linwood must kill him; I'll tell Prince to make his principal fire first," and thus plotting against the man he pretended to serve, Colonel Castleton set about reloading the pistol, while Ellis Linwood, as if to unnerve his adversary by an exhibition of his skill, raised his weapon and aimed at a small pebble lying upon the sand.

To his chagrin he shot over it, and a curse arose to his lips, for he felt that Trevor had unnerved him.

Again were the pistols loaded, the word of advice whispered to Burton Prince, and the duelists received their weapons and stood facing each other and awaiting the word.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

The colonel had won the word, and with his eye upon Ellis Linwood spoke in his terse, ringing tones.

"I am, sir," answered Basil Trevor, with perfect distinctness, while Ellis Linwood merely bowed.

"Fire!"

One pistol flashed on the word, and it was Basil Trevor's, while the bullet struck the extended arm of Ellis Linwood with a dull thud, and knocked the unexploded weapon from his hand to the ground.

"Great God! I gave Linwood the sign, but he was too quick for him," muttered the colonel, as he hastened toward Basil Trevor, saying with feigned anxiety:

"I am glad you are not hurt, Trevor; but you have done for Linwood."

"Oh, no, I did not wish to kill him, so broke his arm above the elbow; but it will make an ugly wound," was the calm reply.

"Cool as an icicle in winter," growled the disappointed colonel, while Dr. Herrick, the surgeon, who was bending over Ellis Linwood, as he lay upon the shawl where he and Burton Prince had placed him, said:

"Linwood, this is an ugly wound, and I must get you home as soon as possible; but I am glad he did not kill you, for he could have done so, I am certain."

The wounded man made no reply, only glanced revengefully at Basil Trevor, who had lighted a cigar and was again gazing listlessly seaward.

Gently the sailors of the yachts raised the litter upon which Ellis Linwood was placed and moved slowly away across the neck of land, on the return to the yachts, Colonel Castleton and Basil Trevor slowly following.

Once more on board the two vessels and the sails were spread, the sloop returning directly to New York, while the Cloud rounded the Hook and stood seaward.

"I regret exceedingly, colonel, that you take this view of it, for I would much rather return at once to New York," declared Basil Trevor, in answer to Colonel Castleton, who had urged that it would be better for him to land at Newport and not in New York State, to avoid any trouble the authorities might give him.

"I fear that Linwood is dangerously wounded, Trevor, and should he die you would have to stand your trial."

"True, and I am willing so to do; I resented an insult offered me, and a duel followed, so I am willing to take the consequences; but, if you are adverse, as my second, to returning, of course I yield to you, though I shall take the train for New York immediately upon my arrival at Newport," and Basil Trevor turned away, as though wishing to drop the subject, and watched with interest the bounding of the vessel over the waves, for a ten-knot breeze was blowing.

As he thus stood, lost in meditation, he suddenly received a severe blow from behind, and, staggering forward, he fell into the sea, while the Cloud sped on without one helping hand stretched forth to save him!

CHAPTER XXIII.

HELEN'S SEARCH.

WHEN Colonel Castleton, the evening of the trouble between Ellis Linwood and Basil Trevor, followed the latter to the home of Helen Burton, he was more than ever mystified regarding the strange woman, and made up his mind to yet know her history, for he had become deeply interested in that beautiful face, behind which he felt were hidden secrets connected with the young artist, as well as with Burton Prince.

Having come to the conclusion that he would solve the mystery, he returned to his rooms at his hotel, a plot in his breast against Basil Trevor, should he escape the bullet of Ellis Linwood, which, the colonel believed, and hoped, was doubtful.

And, unconscious of the deadly intent against him, of the man whom he had only a short while before made his second in the duel, Basil Trevor entered the cosy home of "The Princess," as Helen was now nicknamed by her ardent and unknown admirers, and was ushered into the parlor.

"Ah, Mr. Trevor, I am so glad you have come, for I am in a world of trouble," and it was evident from Helen's warm greeting that this was not their first meeting since he had recognized her, as she entered her carriage, after her visit to Berta Ivey, to make known the character of Burton Prince.

"And can I do aught to relieve you of your trouble, Mrs. Burton?" asked Basil, as he led her to a sofa.

"Yes, you can do much, for I need the advice and assistance of just such a man as you are; but, already, I owe you one favor I can never repay," and she gave a slight shudder.

"I thought that was a secret never to be resurrected from the waters at the base of Lover's Leap," he said, quietly.

"True, I was unkind to recall what must be painful for you to remember; but, to explain my present misfortune—little Florette has been stolen from me."

"What! that pretty little child of the street that you adopted?"

"Yes; I came home from a drive to find her gone, and as she carried nothing with her, I am convinced that she was kidnapped, for, seemingly happy with me, she would hardly leave on her own account."

"I should think not; the child has a history, I suppose?" and Basil Trevor's searching eyes looked straight into the face before him, as though to read there the story he would know.

"Yes, she has; she is the sister of a man now in the Penitentiary, serving his time as a felon, for robbing, as is believed, the bank of Prince & Co.; but I believe he is innocent."

"I remember the man and his trial, for I dropped into the Court House one day and saw him; he was a splendid-looking fellow, and nobility of soul, not infamy, was engraved upon his face; but, then, he confessed his guilt."

"True, and he had a motive for it, for he sacrificed himself. Well, Florette is his sister, and since her brother's incarceration she has led a strange life, for the child, to support herself, kept a boarding-house, and then gave it up to go, disguised as an Italian girl, with an Italian artist, who was making money out of her voice, under the pretense that he intended to save her brother; then I sought her out, and hoped to keep her with me until Carl Brandt was released from prison."

"You knew this Carl, the convict, then?"

"Oh, yes; he was a friend of mine, when in Connecticut attending the academy, and I always liked him; now will you not aid me to find Florette?"

"Assuredly; I will start to-morrow upon the search—no, not to-morrow, as I have an important engagement that cannot be broken; but the day after, and—"

"Well?" she said, simply, as he paused.

"I was going to say that if you did not hear from me, or I did not call by evening, day after to-morrow, send to my rooms, at the Artists' Club House, and get a letter I will leave there for you, and which my valet will give to your messenger."

His tone was so easy, and his manner so calm, that she suspected not that he stood over an open grave, as it were, and not anticipating harm to him, she promised to send for the letter, if she did not see him at the stated time.

For some while longer he remained, and then took his departure; but Helen felt more hopeful after seeing him, of again getting Florette into her possession, for she had learned to dearly love the little street waif, and felt that her beauty would prove a curse to her, if left to the life she had been forced to lead since her brother's condemnation.

But, anxious, if possible, to discover some tidings of her little charge, Helen, the following day ordered her carriage and drove to the office of lawyer Livingstone.

Jicksey, who greatly admired the handsome lady, met her at the door with an awkward bow, and his face turned pale when she said quickly:

"Jicksey, Florette has been stolen from me."

"Oh cracky! you don't say so, missus! Who stole her?"

"That is what I came here to find out. I left her at home yesterday afternoon, and when I returned she was gone."

"She was here yesterday arternoon, missus, and wanted to see ther boss."

"And did she see him?"

"She did for a fact."

"Then he can perhaps tell me of her."

"I hopes so, missus, for I don't want Florette lost, I kin jist tell yer. Will you walk in now and see ther gov'ner?"

"Yes, Jicksey, if he is not busy."

"He'd see you ef he was a-tryin' a murder case," and walking to the private door Jicksey announced in a pompous tone:

"Missus Burton!"

Lawyer Livingstone held too much control over himself to betray emotion, and rose quickly, greeting his visitor in the suave manner he could so well assume before a lady.

"Mrs. Burton, I am delighted to see you, and honored by your visit. Well, I hope, and our little friend Florette is also enjoying good health, is she?"

"In body, yes, I hope, but in mind, no, for, Mr. Livingstone, Florette has been taken from me."

"Taken from you, and by whom?" asked the suwyer, in a pretty piece of acting of innocent larprise.

"That I wish to find out; but she left yesterday, and I have come to you, for I know that you have a string of detectives at your command, and I am willing to pay a large reward for her recovery."

"As how much, for instance? Pardon me, but I wish to be wholly posted."

"Well, a thousand dollars; is that sufficient?"

"Oh, yes, especially as a starter, for it will lead to a knowledge of her whereabouts at any rate, for Florette is not a girl to be easily hidden, Mrs. Burton, and I will do all in my power for you."

"Thank you, and if you need funds advance all necessary, and let me know the amount and I will give you a check," and Helen left the office, and passing out, a look at Jicksey caused him to follow her.

"Jicksey, if you find Florette for me I will give you five hundred dollars, but, don't let the lawyer know I offered it to you."

"Oh no, I wasn't born in ther woods, missus; but I'll do what I kin, though I don't want no money for findin' Florette," and Jicksey returned to his cuties, while Helen drove homeward, and lawyer Livingstone entered in his account-book an item:

"Detective services for Mrs. 'H. B.' in search of 'F.'\$300.00."

"That will do as a starter," the avaricious lawyer muttered, a cunning smile upon his face as he felt that in a pretended search for Florette he could pocket a few hundred dollars.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STARTLING TIDINGS.

WHEN the *Herald* was read upon the morning following the duel between Ellis Linwood and Basil Trevor, the fashionable society of New York was thrown into a fever of excitement, and excited knots of men grouped themselves together at the different clubs and discussed the merits and demerits of the case.

As she came down to her lonely breakfast Helen Burton indolently raised the *Herald* from the table, and almost instantly her eyes fell upon a heading that brought a startled cry from her lips.

With bated breath and white face she read as follows:

"A DUEL IN HIGH LIFE!

"TWO WELL-KNOWN SOCIETY MEN ENGAGE IN AN AFFAIR OF HONOR!

"One seriously wounded!

"A strange retribution overtakes the other

"Our readers, especially those in fashionable life, will be startled to learn of an affair of honor that came off last evening at sunset, on the shores of Sandy Hook, between Mr. Ellis Linwood, a well-known and wealthy New Yorker, and Mr. Basil Trevor, the famous artist from the South, the seconds being Mr. Burton Prince, acting for Mr. Linwood, and Colonel Brete Castleton for Trevor, with Dr. Herrick as surgeon for the duelists.

"The cause of the duel is not fully known, but a quarrel arose between the gentlemen at the Sans Souci Club, and an insult from Mr. Linwood was promptly resented by a blow from the artist, and a challenge followed, which we regret to state has resulted most sadly in the duel that was fought last evening in Jersey.

"From Dr. Herrick, whom our reporter interviewed, we learn at the first fire Mr. Linwood was wounded in the arm, and the bone shattered badly, though it is hoped amputation will not follow.

"The wounded man was brought to the city in the yacht of Mr. Burton Prince, and now lies at his home, where he receives every attention, while his successful adversary, fearing the death of his enemy, urged Colonel Castleton, on whose yacht he left the scene of the duel, to land him on the Connecticut coast; but the colonel states that when at sea, and running rapidly along under a stiff breeze, he suddenly missed Mr. Trevor, and at once hove to and search was made for him in the boats, but without avail.

"The Cloud was then put back for New York, where she arrived before midnight, and Colonel Castleton made his report to the chief of police, at the same time saying that he feared it was a case of suicide, as Mr. Trevor had seemed much cast down after the duel, though a sudden lurch of the yacht might have thrown him overboard.

"In either case the unfortunate affair is greatly to be regretted, and we deeply sympathize with the friends of both gentlemen."

From beginning to end Helen Burton read the account of the duel, her face pale, and her eyes filled with tears, for she had begun to have a strong liking for the young artist.

"This then was the important engagement he had, and the reason he wished me to send to his rooms for a letter should he not visit me, or call this evening. I will send at once," and calling for a servant she dispatched him to the Artists' Club, while she paced to and fro in deep thought, her tempting breakfast remaining untouched.

In half an hour the messenger returned and placed in her hand the expected missive.

She shuddered as her hand touched it, for she felt that it came from the dead, and it was a moment before she could read the lines before her; but at last she conquered her emotion and read:

"MY DEAR MRS. BURTON:

"If what is herein reaches your eye it will be when I am no longer in the land of the living, for though I did not make known to you to-night that I was to fight a duel on the morrow I now tell you so. Though I have little fear of myself, as regards the result—"

"Poor Trevor! how little can we read what the future holds in store for us!" broke in Helen; and brushing the tears from her eyes, she continued her reading:

"—still accidents will happen often, and should Fate do her worst against me, I desire to ask of you a favor, and that is that you will visit the home on the Hudson of the remarkable woman known as the 'Queen of Mystery' and also as the 'Red Witch,' and learn all she can tell you regarding the past life of Colonel Brete Castleton, my second in to-morrow's affair, and in whom I have little confidence, and Mrs. Victoire Earl, a leader of society here, of whom you doubtless know.

"In a visit to the Red Witch some time ago she made known secrets of the past that surprised me deeply, and though an unbeliever in the superstitions of such people, I was again led to seek her, and on my second visit learned enough to convince me that Colonel Castleton and Victoire Earl are in some way connected with my past life, and to you I intrust the duty of finding out, with the hope that you will drive them from the position they now hold and I will be avenged.

"More that you would know Zaidah, the Red Witch, can tell you, and, in case you need money, I to-night leave you my heiress, my will having been signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses half an hour ago, and, as I have no kindred I know of, there will be no one to contest your claim.

"As regards Geraldine Earl, I believe her to be innocent of the fact that her mother is a wicked woman and playing a deep game, and I regret the blow that must fall upon her; but in punishing the guilty the innocent often suffer.

"Now I will bid you a last farewell, with the hope that your life may brighten as your years increase.

"BASIL TREVOR,

"A Homeless Waif."

The oftener Helen Burton read this letter the more she was mystified thereby. She determined to at once seek Zaidah, the Red Witch, and learn from her all she could tell her, not only regarding Colonel Castleton and Mrs. Earl, but also about the young artist himself.

And while she was driving toward the weird cabin on the Hudson, there was one slender form bowed in an agony of grief in her handsome home, while she clutched in her hand the paper telling her that Basil Trevor was no more.

And that sorrowing girl was Berta Ivey, a short while before the promised wife of Burton Prince, but now loving the dead artist with all the intensity of her nature and mourning him in utter abandon.

Nor was she alone in her suffering, for, when the news reached the Earl mansion a wail of sorrow went up from the lips of Geraldine, who had hoped one day to become the wife of Basil Trevor, though never had he breathed to her one word of love.

And with hard, but triumphant face Mrs. Earl tried to soothe her daughter, though she kept from her the fact that she knew how Basil Trevor had met his death—that it was neither a suicide from remorse, nor an accident; but the result of Brete Castleton's plot against him.

And into still another home the news of the duel and its fatal result fell with heavy stroke, for, as lawyer Livingstone, startled out of his usual self-control, read aloud the head-lines of the affair, they brought his lovely daughter to her feet, white and trembling.

"Ellis Linwood, seriously wounded, papa?" she asked, in constrained tones.

"So it says, Bella, and Basil Trevor committed suicide; but, girl, you are as white as a ghost; calm yourself and order my carriage, and I will drive up to see Ellis."

"And may I go?" she pleaded.

"No, no! What would the world say? I will go and return at once and give you full particulars. By the way, I received a letter from Florette this morning; she is delighted with her new home and likes her governess amazingly, and is studying hard; don't you wish to run down Saturday to the farm?"

"I only wish to hear of Ellis Linwood; please hurry there and back, papa."

"Why, Bella, you are badly gone on Ellis, as the boys say; but, as he's a clever fellow, and will inherit a large fortune, I have no objection; but I am off, as soon as I've swallowed this cup of coffee," and, shortly after, lawyer Livingstone was en route to the Linwood mansion, while he muttered:

"The girl loves the worthless rascal, and is too good for him; but, I'll see that he does not break her heart, and in a young millionaire we can pardon some things."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRAMP.

As Helen's carriage neared the lonely home of Zaidah, the Red Witch, the driver suddenly drew up to arrange a part of the harness, which had become loosened, and as he did so a man approached from a thicket by the roadside, and in the shadow of which he had been resting.

"Ah, lady, giva poor trampa monna; hava nutha to eat."

Helen, ever generous, opened her purse, when she saw the man start back at sight of her face, while he said aloud, though speaking to himself:

"It is sama lady; sama one."

"You speak as though you had seen me before," and Helen placed in his hand half a dollar.

"I hava seen lady before—neva forgeta time."

There was something in the man's tone and look that impressed Helen with a strange dread, and she was about to order the coachman to drive on at once, when she checked herself and glanced straight into the face of the tramp, for such he had called himself.

"And where have you seen me before?" she asked.

The man glanced cautiously at the coachman.

who was still busy with his harness, and said, in a low tone:

"It taka color out of cheek if me tella you."

"Oh no; speak out, for I have nothing to fear," said Helen, firmly, though she felt a sinking at her heart she could not account for.

"Wella, me tella lady; me a poor trampa, and walk all about America, and see lady in Connecticut."

"Ah, at my home in Connecticut, where my mother doubtless fed you, for she never turns any one away from her door," and Helen gave a sigh of relief.

"Oh no, neva see lady at her home; but in woods, on rock, and above river."

"What, at Lover's Leap? No, I never saw you there."

"No, but me sawa lady; me resta in woods, hear quarrel with lady and gent'lemana—saw him leava and coma back to find 'notha mana and killa—"

"For God's sake keep silent!"

The words broke forth almost in a wail from her lips, for now, as she believed herself alone the possessor of the secret of Edgar Monkton's death, to find it known by another, a vagabond tramp, was a terrible shock to her.

"Me comma lady's home, and tella all me saw, she wish me talk not now," said Pietro, the Italian, insolently, for the reader has doubtless ere this recognized him as the tramp.

"No, I do not wish to talk more about it."

"But me want talk about it; me poor trampa need monna."

"Here is all I have with me; now go and never let me see or hear of you again," and Helen emptied the contents of her little purse into the outstretched hands.

The man smiled grimly and thrust the money into his pocket, just as the coachman mounted to his box.

"Drive on, Ben, quick!" ordered the beauty, and Pietro stepped back just in time to escape having his feet crushed; but he shook his fist after the vehicle and muttered:

"She thinka Pietro Avilla a fool! Oh, no, me hava mucha sense, and she giva me mucha monna, or me tella police all me knowa."

"Me greata man—getta rich quick, sama Americanos."

He watched the carriage until it disappeared from sight, and then going to the thicket picked up his cane and bundle, which he had left there, and set off upon his return to the city, for he had been going away from town when he saw Helen.

Arriving, after a rapid walk, at a wayside inn, he hired a rickety vehicle, and with a boy to drive him returned to the point where he had last seen the carriage of "The Princess" disappear, and to his delight discerned it standing off the road a few rods, under the shelter of a large tree, and with the coachman nodding upon his seat.

Going on to a convenient place the Italian bade the boy turn to the rightabout, and then come to a halt.

And here he remained until the stylish turnout of Helen Burton drove once more upon the highway and rolled rapidly back toward the city.

By blows and curses the old horse was urged on in chase, the boy seemingly afraid of his strange passenger, and the carriage was not lost sight of, until it deposited its fair mistress at her own door and drove round to the stables.

Then Pietro went slowly by the house, gazing intently at it, as though to impress it upon his memory.

"Ah, me all righta now," and the Italian ordered the boy to return from whence he came, and an hour after was once more trudging along the highway leading up the Hudson, while Helen Burton was pacing her room, her face white and hard, for there was grief, and almost despair, in her heart, for she had lost Florette, mourned for Basil Trevor as dead, had been deeply impressed by her visit to the Red Witch, and had caught sight of the evil face of Pietro Avilla as he drove by, and well knew that he had followed her to see where she lived.

Utterly wretched, her brave heart almost failed her, and sinking upon a sofa she burst into tears, for she felt that the meshes of future trouble were tightening around her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PIETRO'S LITTLE GAME.

WHEN Pietro set forth for a tramp into the country, of course he had a motive of impor-

tance in view, for that avaricious and wicked Italian never acted without good cause in his own selfish interests.

What was his motive in this case the reader will soon discover.

Wending his way along at a pace which proved him to be a good pedestrian, he seemed wholly satisfied with himself and the world in general, for a look of devilish contentment rested upon his dark face.

Shortly after dark he stopped at an inn upon the roadside, and near the river, and inquired if he could hire a boat to row across to the other shore, and get a room upon his return?

The landlord was not prepossessed with the appearance of his would-be guest, and said he had boats, but would not let them out to strangers, without a deposit equal to their value.

This was at once produced from an inner pocket and placed in the landlord's hand, and his respect rising when he saw the Italian had money, he told him a good supper would soon be prepared for him.

Pietro ate his supper with a relish, for apparently nothing ever disturbed his appetite, and then got into his boat, and pulled out into the river.

As long as he was distinguishable from the shore to any curious eye, Pietro rowed straight ahead, as though going across the river; but when objects on land grew dim, he turned upstream and continued his course for perhaps two miles, when he came back to the New York side once more and landed at a small pier that jutted out from the grounds of a handsome house.

Back among the trees was visible the mansion, and from a window toward the water a bright light streamed out upon the lawn.

Fastening his boat the man cautiously approached the house, dodging from tree to tree to keep in the shadow as much as possible, though the night was dark, the stars being obscured by clouds.

At length he reached the piazza, and with noiseless tread crossed it to where he could get a view of the interior of the brightly-lighted room, from whence came the low thrumming sound of a guitar.

Within all had an air of extreme comfort, for the room was large, handsomely furnished, and was evidently used as a library and music-room together, for a piano and book-cases were visible.

Upon a sofa was a young girl, a guitar in her lap, and as she broke forth in song and raised her face, the Italian gave a chuckle of delight, for the singer was Florette.

"Wella, she happy here; me maka unhappy," he muttered, with a fiendish look, and he crept closer to the window, and, as patiently as a cat watching a mouse he sat and watched the young girl, untouched by her sweet voice, which had so often warbled forth melody and put money into his pockets.

Presently the door opened and a matronly-looking lady entered, and said pleasantly:

"Why, Florette, I am surprised and delighted to hear what a sweet voice you have, and I will try hard to cultivate it as it deserves. Mr. Livingstone led me to believe I was to be the governess of a little street Arab, and already I find you far advanced in your studies, and an accomplished musician."

"My father taught me until his death, Mrs. Weldon, and then my brother took great pains with me," said Florette, sadly.

"And where is your brother now, my dear?" asked the governess.

"In the penitentiary."

"A felon!"

The words broke from the lips of the governess involuntarily, and seeing the expression of pain upon the young girl's face, she said, quickly:

"Forgive me, Florette; but your answer startled me so."

"Ah, I have to hear my brother spoken illy of, Mrs. Weldon; but, though a convict, I do not believe him guilty, though he was sent there for robbing a bank of ten thousand dollars."

"I hope it will be proven as you believe, one day, and all come right; now, my dear, sing me a song, some light, pretty ballad to drive the blues away."

Florette ran her fingers across the strings and then, as though the words and music were in sympathy with her feelings, she sung the Switzer's song of Home, her plaintive voice bringing tears to the eyes of the good woman whom lawyer Livingstone had judiciously selected as governess of the young girl.

"Well, my dear, you certainly have a fine voice and sing with marked expression; but it

is bedtime now, so I will give orders for a drive before breakfast and then we will retire."

As Mrs. Weldon spoke she left the room, and Florette leant over her guitar and burst into tears.

And so bitterly did she weep, at the remembrance of her poor brother, serving out his sentence a short distance further up the Hudson, that she failed to hear the step, and see the form of Pietro, who had glided through the open window and approached her.

The next instant a rough hand was placed upon her mouth with rude force, and an arm encircled her waist.

In vain did Florette strive to cry out and struggle; she was powerless in the strong grasp of the Italian, who, with wonderful agility and strength, darted across the room, sprung through the open window, and with the speed of a deer rushed over the lawn toward the river.

By a mighty effort Florette managed to twist her mouth free of the man's clutch upon it, and gave one long, piercing cry for help, which was at once answered by the yelp of a dog.

"Cursa you, you maka me trouble, girl," hissed the Italian, and he ran on with increased speed; but upon his trail was a savage brute, a huge mastiff, while lights flashed in the mansion and excited voices rung out, proving that the cry had been heard.

"Oh, cursa you, girl," again hissed the Italian, as he heard the sharp yelp of the dog now close upon him, and, finding that he could not escape without a struggle with the ferocious beast, he dashed his hand against Florette's face with a force that stunned her, and dropping her to the ground turned just in time to meet the attack.

With one hand outstretched and the other holding his long-bladed knife, he met the bound of the dog, and clutched him by the throat, holding on firmly, though the weight and rush of the brute sent him down upon his back.

Then followed a shot and terrible struggle, with fierce growls and bitter curses, and then a loud yelp of pain, and the Italian sprung to his feet, while the dog rolled in the agonies of death.

"Oh, cursa the dog! he bitta me," he cried, but at the same time hearing the alarm at the house grow louder, he turned and raised Florette in his arms, and once more bounded away in the direction of the river.

A moment more and he had reached his boat, thrown the still unconscious girl into the stern, and seizing his oars sent the light craft flying out upon the dark waters, leaving far behind him the flashing lights and loud voices of the servants at the Livingstone mansion.

Having crossed over to the other shore, he turned down-stream under the shadow of the Palisades, and, though evidently suffering from the severe bite in his arm, held steadily on, alternately chuckling at his success in getting possession of Florette, and cursing the dog that had bitten him.

Presently he rested on his oars and took a long look at the girl, who lay as motionless as though dead.

"Killa her? No! she mucha strong; no killa her with little bit," and he stepped aft and took hold of her pulse, which throbbed beneath his touch. "She all right," he said, laconically, and once more bent to his oars, until suddenly there came a fluttering sound that caused him to look quickly around, and even his nerve momentarily failed him as he saw the sharp bows of a vessel almost upon him.

Seizing his oars once more, he endeavored to force himself clear of the course of the craft, at the same time calling out in a loud tone:

"Porta your helm! porta!"

It was evident that the boat had not been seen from on board the vessel, and the ringing voice coming from the water ahead so startled the helmsman that he put the helm hard-a-starboard, and the sharp bows struck the little craft, crashing in its sides with a terrific noise.

Seeing that a collision must come, Pietro, with a bitter curse, sprung overboard to save himself, and the next moment the yacht had glided on, with the row-boat crushed beneath its hull.

"There was a woman in that boat, sir; I saw her dress go under," called out a seaman who had run forward, and addressing a person, evidently an officer, who was standing in the waist.

"Lay her to, Dick, and launch a boat," called out the officer, and he sprung unhesitatingly into the waters, and, as the yacht passed on and swept up into the wind, he heard a voice near him cry out:

"Oh, save me, sir!"

A few strong strokes and he seized in his arms the drowning Florette, for she had been feign-

ing unconsciousness in the boat, though at first stunned by Pietro's blow, and had not been hurt by the collision.

"Here away with that boat!" called out the man, as he supported the young girl in his arms, and in a moment more the yacht's yawl approached, and the two were safely drawn in.

"Were you alone?" asked her rescuer of Florette.

"Oh, no, sir; but I would rather die than be again in the power of the man who was with me," she said, earnestly.

"Pull to the yacht, men!" said the officer, and Florette was soon in the brightly-lighted cabin, and face to face with the man who had saved her from death—and that man was Burton Prince.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HELEN VISITS THE RED WITCH.

I WILL now return to the visit of Helen Burton, made at the request of Basil Trevor, to Zaidah, the Queen of Mystery, and upon which occasion she was so unfortunate as to come upon the Italian Pietro.

Approaching the place of the Witch as near as possible in her carriage, Helen dismounted and walked toward the little cabin on the cliff, her coming saluted by the warning howl of a large dog, and a hum of excitement among the other dumb creatures, while the Africans mumbled a few words together, apparently of admiration at the beauty and elegant toilet of the visitor.

"I wish to see Madame Zaidah, if you please," said Helen to the old negress, who at once motioned to her to wait, and entered the cabin without speaking a word.

But a moment, only, was she gone, and then, throwing open the door, by sign, and not by word, invited her to enter, which Helen did with a slight shudder, for the Africans, the huge snake and the other brute creatures, had a strange effect upon her, though her nerves were by no means weak.

The room had undergone no change since the visit of Basil Trevor and his party, and, as on that occasion, the Red Witch stood ready to receive her visitor, though her dress was now of crimson velvet, and a striped snake, fully four feet in length, was curled around her neck, to serve as a bracelet, while about her waist was the same style of loathsome belt.

Though her life had been spent in the country, Helen had a horror of reptiles of all descriptions and started back with a slight cry as her eyes fell upon the woman and her disgusting pets, and for a moment seemed as though about to fly from the cabin; but the Red Witch stretched forth her hand and said, in her deep, rich tones:

"Stay! They are harmless in my presence. You would have me serve you?"

"Yes; I come from one who visited you some time ago, with a party of friends, and it is his desire to know from you the history of two who then accompanied him."

"Their names, please."

"Colonel Brete Castleton, and Mrs. Victoire Earl."

Helen noticed the woman gave a slight start as she mentioned the names, but, with no other sign of emotion, Zaidah asked:

"And who sent you here?"

"Basil Trevor."

"Why did he not come himself?"

"If you have the power you profess to have, you should know."

"No, I have not read the stars or signs, nor have I been in a trance to know why; do you wish that I should tell you?" and there was a slight uneasiness in the woman's tone and manner.

Helen was strong-minded, and believed little in superstitions and pretenders to the magical art, and she determined to put the woman to the test, and answered:

"Yes, tell me why he came not with me."

Zaidah sighed, but, without hesitation, turned and touched a bell three times.

Instantly the door opened, and the two Africans appeared, bowing low.

In an unknown tongue the woman addressed them, and they went into an inner room and soon returned with a lounge, or rather settee, from which Helen recoiled, for it was made of human bones.

With staring eyes Helen gazed upon its construction, for the settee was upheld by four skeleton legs and feet, from the knee down, and every bone intact, while the seat was made of innumerable ribs, thigh and arm bones, securely and ingeniously fastened together.

At each end was a grinning row of five skulls, to serve as an arm for the lounge, the sightless

eye sockets staring each other in the face, and with hideous grins upon their white teeth.

Placing the settee upon the right of the altar, the negroes brought in a vase and placed it at either end, at the same time lighting a fire within, which flamed up an instant, and then only emitted smoke, one of blood-red hue, the other black.

Folding her dress around her, the Red Witch laid down upon the lounge, and, crossing her hands upon her breast, lay as motionless as the dead, while the negro stood beside her, and the negress went up to the vase on the altar and began to chant a wild, weird song, in a voice that was most plaintive.

Instantly without the dog began to howl most dismally, and the cat to whine, as if as accompaniment to the negress, and swinging his long arms like a pendulum above the recumbent woman, the negro said, in monotonous tones, and in English:

"Heart, heart, cease to beat—
Pulse, pulse, cease to throb—
Blood, blood, cease to flow—
Eye, eye, cease to see—
Ear, ear, cease to hear—
Flesh, flesh, cease to feel—
For Obi is King."

Again and again the African repeated his monotonous chant, while the negress's plaintive song, and the dismal howl of the dog, held Helen spellbound with horror, especially as Zaidah, after a few convulsive shudders, lay like one in reality dead, for the eyes stared straight upward, and yet seemed not to see.

At last the negro ceased his song, and passed his hands rapidly over the recumbent form of Zaidah, the two snakes lying dormant, as though they too had felt his magnetic influence.

"Now let lady speak," and the negress turned to Helen, who tried several times to utter a word before she could command her voice.

"What shall I say?" she at last asked of the negress.

"Ask questions lady wants to know."

"Ah!" and turning to Zaidah she said, in distinct tones:

"Let Zaidah, the Queen of Mystery, tell me now why Basil Trevor came not here to see her?"

The lips of the recumbent woman moved, but the eyes still kept up their stony stare, and in a voice wholly unlike the one in which the Red Witch had before spoken she said aloud:

"I see a man and a woman in a grand home—they are plotting against one they seem to fear.—The scene has changed, and I behold four men seated around a table playing cards—one of those men is the one who plotted with the woman—the other is the man they plotted against—an insult is given—a blow follows—a challenge is sent and accepted—the plotter has set his trap and the plotted against has fallen into it.—Again the scene changes—I see a lonely beach, with cedars in the background, and five men stand there, two facing death—I hear the report of a pistol—one man falls badly wounded—the other is unhurt.—Again the scene shifts—a schooner yacht is heading seaward in the darkness and over a rough sea—the crew are forward—one man is at the helm—another stands near, with his back to him—the helmsman suddenly moves his helm—the yacht gives a lurch—the man standing up is struck a severe blow and falls into the sea— Oh, God! Basil Trevor is drowning!"

The wild shriek that broke from the lips of the Red Witch startled the two Africans as much as it did Helen, for they sprung to her aid with cries of dire alarm and distress.

She had half-raised up at her cry, but had fallen quickly back again, and now seemed to be certainly dead; but she was raised in the strong arms of the negro and borne into the next room, while the negress turned to Helen and said, earnestly:

"Go, lady, now! come again in seven day."

"She is not dead, then?"

"No, but hurt here," and the negress placed her hand upon her heart.

"I am sorry, and will go, as I can be of no service here; but, here is my card, should your mistress wish to see me," and Helen turned away and was soon on her way back to the city, deeply impressed by her visit, and pondering upon the strange and startling cry of grief from the lips of the Red Witch when she saw in the trance that Basil Trevor was drowning.

"There is some strange mystery in all this—he was murdered, not lost, and I will find the murderer," she muttered, and her now pale face and set lips proved that she was in deadly earnest.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNWELCOME SURPRISE.

SEVERAL days passed away after the duel, and still it was the subject of almost universal comment in metropolitan society, and the pros and cons were argued over and over again.

But sympathy was more generally bestowed upon Basil Trevor, who was universally popular, than upon Ellis Linwood, whose haughty bearing, even to his equals, was not calculated to win for him many friends.

His wound, too, was improving rapidly, and all danger of losing his arm was over, while the affair in his own mind would make him quite a lion in society, for if he had not killed his adversary, he had at least gotten rid of him.

To the authorities both Colonel Castleton and Burton Prince had reported the duel, and its unfortunate consequences, and there the matter rested, for in those days dueling was not so harshly looked upon as now.

One evening, as Ellis Linwood reclined in an easy-chair, nursing his wounded arm, and cogitating upon what the future might have in store for him, his servant brought in word that a young man, who looked like a naval officer desired to see him.

"Show him in, Ben; but, did he give no name?"

"None, sir," and the servant retired to usher into the room a young man, still wearing his cloak and naval cap.

"I would see you alone, sir," he said, quietly, and Ellis Linwood motioned to the servant to retire, and observing that he had every appearance of a gentleman, he said, politely:

"Be seated, sir, and tell me how I can serve you."

"Ellis, do you not know me?"

The cap and cloak were suddenly thrown aside, and revealed a woman's form, in spite of her undress midshipman's uniform and false mustache.

"Bella Livingstone!"

And Ellis Linwood half sprung from his seat.

"Yes, Ellis, but forgive me, for I had to see you; I could not remain away from you when I knew you were suffering," and she knelt by the side of the wounded man's chair, and bent her proud head humbly.

"I cannot censure you, Bella, when I know of your anxiety for me; but it is wrong in you to come here, and were it known would bring disgrace upon you—especially after—"

"Ah, go on, and say, especially after your late conduct toward me that proved you had ceased to love me," she said, bitterly.

"I cannot deny but that I have changed in my love, Bella, yet from no act of yours, I must admit; my father wished me to marry Marion Prince, and—"

He paused, and she went on:

"And she refused you, for I heard all from a servant now in our employ, who was then with banker Prince, and who told my maid how he had overheard the reception of your offer and its refusal; of course Nanette told me."

His face flushed at her words, but he said, quickly:

"It was my father's doing, and not mine."

"Well, we will not speak of it, especially now when you are suffering; but I hoped that you would be glad to see me, Ellis."

"I must frankly say that I am not," he said, impatiently, and seeing her hurt look, he added:

"But it is for your sake, Bella."

"Ellis Linwood, I do not believe you; a short while ago and you would have been, but now I am cast aside like a toy that a child is tired of, and feeling that your father wishes you to marry either Marion Prince, Berta Ivey or Geraldine Earl, all of whom are heiresses to millions, beautiful and accomplished, you wish to cast me aside, because I am not as lovely or rich as they are."

"No, Bella, you wrong me, for what you have been to me they can never be; but my father is set upon my marrying one of those three girls, and were I to refuse to obey him, he would cut me off with a shilling."

"It is your father that is mercenary then, and not you, Ellis?"

"Yes, that is it."

"And you love me all the same?"

"Yes, Bella, of course I do."

"Well, let him cut you off, for you owe it to me to make me your wife, and I have a fortune by no means small, as my father can tell you, and we can be so happy together, Ellis."

He would not look into the pleading eyes of the girl whom he had professed to love, and then cut adrift from, in the hope of securing a richer prize; but, his selfish nature would not permit him to make her happy by marrying her, as he feared thereby he might sacrifice him-

self, and he determined to tell her that she could never be his wife, when the door opened and the servant announced:

"Lawyer Livingstone!"

A slight cry broke from Bella's lips, and Ellis Linwood turned deadly pale, and he inwardly cursed the servant; but the lawyer had called twice a day, for a few moments, to ask about the young man, and the liveried valet had thought there was no harm in showing him right into his master's room, as often he had done so before, and in the person in naval uniform he had not suspected a woman's fair form.

"Ah, Ellis, my boy, dropped in to see how you are," began lawyer Livingstone, as the servant closed the door behind him, "for Bella will not allow me any rest until I call twice a day; she is deeply interested in you, you sly young duelist," and the lawyer crossed over to where Ellis Linwood sat.

Poor Bella had at once sprung to her feet, as the door opened, and fumbled about for her mustache, which she had removed, and for her cap, which upon removing had caused her wealth of hair to fall in braids around her far below her waist.

But before Ellis Linwood could utter a word the keen eye of the attorney detected the disguise, and in angry tones he shouted:

"Bella Livingstone, what means this masquerade?"

"Father, father, do not betray me to others," she pleaded, turning toward him, her beautiful eyes filled with tears.

Lawyer Livingstone was an intensely circum-spect individual, where his own affairs were concerned, and he immediately stepped to the two doors and locked them, while he continued, in a low tone:

"I ask what means this masquerade and visit?"

Bella looked imploringly at Ellis Linwood, for him to speak, but he had turned very pale, and selfishly intended allowing her to make her own explanation, and no answer was given until the irate father a third time asked the question:

"Once more, I ask what means this?"

"It means, sir, that I love Ellis Linwood, alas! too well for my own happiness, and I came here to see him in this disguise," and Bella spoke firmly, and looked her father straight in the eyes.

"And is this the only visit you ever made him?"

"It is; I know it was wrong, but I did so want to see him in his suffering," she said, pitifully.

"I told her it was wrong, sir, and that she would compromise herself."

"No, I will not, for I will return as I came, without any one knowing me in this disguise—I will go now, father," and she wound her braids around her head and replaced her false mustache.

Then throwing her cloak around her shoulders, she said:

"Good-by, Ellis," and she held forth her hand, which he grasped lightly, and replied petulantly:

"Now don't be so foolish again, Miss Livingstone."

She made no reply to him, and walked to the door, where she turned.

"Will you go with me, father?"

"No, go as you came, alone, for that is doubtless your hack at the door; I will see you when I return home."

"Father, remember, you and Ellis must have no trouble about my foolish act; he is not to blame for my coming."

"All right; there will be no trouble, only I have a little business matter to arrange with him."

"I will trust you, father."

"You may," and Bella Livingstone left the room and drove home with a heavy heart.

"Well, Mr. Linwood, matters seem to have gone pretty far between you and my daughter," and there was a look in the eyes of lawyer Livingstone that Ellis Linwood did not at all like, and he was sorry now that Bella had not remained, for he felt that there was trouble in store for him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LAWYER LIVINGSTONE SPRINGS HIS TRAP.

FOR a moment, after the leading question of lawyer Livingstone, Ellis Linwood made no reply, and then, seeing that one was expected of him, he answered, ambiguously:

"We were always good friends, sir, and I thought with your permission."

"Oh, yes; but is it not going too far to have her come to your rooms in disguise?"

"That was her fault, sir, for I never asked her to do so; in fact—"

"Coward! like Adam of old, you would blame the woman," sneered the lawyer.

"What, sir, do I understand that you dare to call me a coward?"

"Anger will do not the least good in this case, Ellis Linwood, as you will find out. You doubtless did not ask Bella to come here to see you, but your intimacy with her in the past, alas, so her conduct betrays, been such that she acted as though she knew you would understand her motive, and has risked her fair name by coming here; so what have you to say, sir, in rebuttal evidence?"

"Only that I am sorry she did come, and more sorry that you saw her here."

"I am glad I saw her, for it enables me to bring you to terms."

"I do not understand, sir."

"Oh, you will, ere I am through. To begin, I noticed long ago that you were very attentive to my daughter, and, what is more, I observed that she loved you."

"To this I did not object, in one sense of the word, though I did in another."

"My objection, to mention it first, was your character—"

"Sir, you are insulting."

"Oh, keep cool, Linwood, for the doctors say quiet is necessary to you, on account of your wound, and I am sorry you are not wholly well now."

"I say that I objected to your character, knowing that you played cards, drank heavily, and was known as a *roué*; but, those faults I overlooked, as your family was far more aristocratic than mine, and moved in a circle a strata above my associations, and I desired my daughter to form an alliance that would give her an *entrée* among the *élite*, especially as I examined into the matter and knew that you were heir to several millions, and your father was slowly dying."

"You have it all down fine," sneered the young man.

"Oh, yes, I always get things down fine; but, to continue—I noticed of late that you were not so attentive to Bella as you had been, and I was about to speak to you on the subject, when you placed yourself up for a target, and got a broken arm by it; then I would have delayed it still longer, had it not been for the meeting of my daughter here in your rooms to-night, and the fact that your little note, twice increased, and twice enlarged, falls due in a few days."

"I know that, and it has worried me, for I have called too heavily upon the governor to ask him now for the enormous sum of twenty-five thousand dollars."

"It can be arranged without calling upon the governor, my dear boy."

"You will renew it, then, for another year? for in that time my father must certainly die."

"No, I will tear it up."

"Tear it up? Do I hear aright? Ah, I know now; you wish me to keep silent about Bella's coming to my rooms?" said Ellis Linwood, eagerly.

"Ah, no, for you will keep that a secret, I know."

"What then can be your motive?" and the young man did not like the smile upon the lawyer's face.

"I will tear this note up, and the others which you thoughtlessly left in my possession at each renewal, upon one condition only."

"Name it!"

"That you marry my daughter."

"Never, sir!"

"Think before you answer."

"I say no; she is not my equal in society, and—"

"That is one reason I pay largely to raise her to your circle of the upper ten, and sacrifice her by a marriage to a man whom I know to be a villain."

The cool manner and cutting words of the lawyer nearly drove Ellis Linwood wild with anger, and had he been able he would have sprung upon him; but he said, hoarsely:

"I say never, and I swear it, lawyer Livingstone."

"Many a man has perjured himself by swearing falsely, Ellis Linwood, and you will do the same in this case," was the calm retort.

"Ah, no, for you cannot bully me into a marriage with your daughter, whom I admit to be beautiful and accomplished, simply because you hold my note for twenty-five thousand dollars, due in a few weeks."

"How will you extricate yourself, Ellis?"

"Why, I will get the money in some way and pay you."

"But I refuse to sell the notes."

"Then, if I offer you the money and you refuse—and, mind you, I will do it before irreproachable witnesses—you can then go to the devil, for you cannot collect after that, and I will be that amount in."

"Ellis Linwood, I would not let you take that note up for fifty, nay, not for a hundred thousand dollars."

"You prize it most highly."

"I do."

"For what reason?"

"The indorsement!"

"I do not understand," said the young man, faintly.

"You are obtuse; I say I prize it, and the others I hold through your carelessness on account of the indorsement, for they are indorsed by your firm, and by you."

"Well?"

"You have no right to sign the firm's name; you have done so to get money to hide your own sins, and, Ellis Linwood, you have committed forgery."

"Great God! and you led me to do this?"

"Yes, and I hold the forged indorsement."

The young man was now as white as marble, and he trembled violently, for he saw that the lawyer held him in his power; but after awhile he said, anxiously:

"If I promise to marry your daughter, you will tear those notes up?"

"No."

"In God's name what more do you want?"

"Your promise is as worthless as your forged indorsement; but the moment after you marry her I will place the notes in your hands."

"Ah! but my father will never consent."

"He must."

"But he will not, for he has sworn I shall marry only a rich girl, and a very rich one at that."

"Bella is rich."

"A few thousands, perhaps."

"Oh, no, for your note calls for twenty-five thousand, and I will cover that with five times that sum as her dowry."

"Can you do it?"

"Yes, for I have not worked for thanks, but money."

"Livingstone, you are playing some deep game in wishing me to marry your daughter."

"I told you my motive; you are aristocratic, and with your money and her own, my daughter will be the richest young woman in New York. Now, which shall it be, a happy young bridegroom or the penitentiary?"

"Of course I have no alternative."

"So be it; but, mind you, Bella must feel that you act willingly in this matter, and when your father has seen her I know he will not object, especially when the old miser knows she is rich; good-night, my son; take good care of yourself, and just as soon as you are able come round and dine with us," and lawyer Livingstone took his departure followed by bitter imprecations from the lips of Ellis Linwood, who had been so cleverly caught in the attorney's trap.

CHAPTER XXX.

HELEN AS AN "INTERVIEWER."

Two days after his night adventure upon the Hudson, when his yacht crashed into the row-boat, and he sprung into the river and saved Florette from a watery grave, Burton Prince sat alone in his elegant home, looking over his private accounts, and wondering how he was going to meet certain bills without calling upon his father for funds.

And here he dreaded refusal—nay, almost felt assured of it, as banker Prince was in no estimable humor toward his son, since the match with Berta Ivey had been broken off, and he had acted as second in the duel between Ellis Linwood and Basil Trevor.

"A lady to see you, sir," said a servant, entering the room.

"A lady to see me, Thomas, and here, at the governor's house?" he asked, with surprise and alarm.

"Yes, sir, she is in the parlor."

"And where is the governor?"

"Gone out for a drive in the Park, sir."

"And my sister?"

"Gone with your father, sir."

Burton Prince gave a sigh of relief, and anxious to get rid of his unwelcome visitor before the return of his father and sister, he entered the parlor, where sat a lady dressed superbly, and gazing out of the window, while she patted her little French boot impatiently.

At the sound of his step she turned.

"Helen! you here?" and he turned deadly pale.

"Yes, I came to see you upon a matter of

business, and as I care not to remain longer in your hateful presence than is necessary, I will proceed at once to make known why I am here."

"I am hateful to you then now, Helen?" he asked, infatuated by her beauty, and mentally cursing himself for ever having given her up.

"Yes, I hate you; but I did not come to tell you what you should already know; now answer me—you were second to Ellis Linwood in his duel with Basil Trevor?"

"I was; but how does that interest you?"

"That is not your affair; I am here to ask, not to answer questions," she said, imperiously.

"Now tell me, did not Basil Trevor spare the life of Mr. Linwood?"

"How mean you?"

"Could he not have killed him?"

"I believe that he could have done so, for he said to Colonel Castleton, before they fought, that he would not kill him, only wound him."

"Did Colonel Castleton act with honor toward Mr. Trevor?"

"Of course, for he was his second."

"That proves nothing; did Mr. Trevor have perfect faith in him?"

"I think not, as he fired off the pistol when first loaded and handed to him; but, Helen, you are worse than lawyer Livingstone for questioning one," and Burton Prince tried to smile pleasantly.

But, unheeding his words and smile, Helen continued:

"And Mr. Trevor went to sea in the colonel's yacht?"

"Yes, the Cloud rounded the Hook and stood seaward, while I ran home with poor Linwood."

"And when did you see Colonel Castleton next?"

"Late that night at the Club, for, before he was a league off shore Trevor fell, or jumped, overboard, and the colonel put back and reported his loss."

"Do you think that Mr. Trevor committed suicide?"

"He did not seem like a man who would do so; I have thought that he fell overboard."

"Thank you; I merely desired your version of the affair; good-afternoon, Mr. Prince."

"Stay, Helen; one moment, please," he cried, eagerly.

"Well, sir?"

"Helen, will you ever be thus cold to me? Will you never again love me?"

"Never!"

Without another word she swept from the house, and again Burton Prince felt that his own act had divided him forever from that splendid woman, whom he now loved more than he had ever believed his nature capable of loving.

From the handsome brown-stone mansion of banker Prince Helen drove to the hotel where Colonel Castleton had his bachelor quarters and lived in luxurious ease.

That gentleman was surprised with her card, just as he was preparing for a drive in the Park.

"Mrs. Helen Burton—ha! It is my beauty! Ask her into my parlor, Ayooob," he said to his dark-faced Hindoo servant, who acted as his valet.

Helen entered the sumptuously-furnished parlors, and, as she glanced around upon the articles of *vertu*, the works of art, in the way of statues and paintings, and the various things that denoted refinement and wealth in the occupant of the rooms, she could but think that the colonel had most delightful quarters and showed exquisite taste in their furnishing.

Entering with the easy grace habitual to him, the colonel approached and said, in his suave way:

"Dear madam, I am honored; how can I serve you?"

He felt that some deep motive had brought her there, and, as he gazed in her face, he mentally decided that she was the most beautiful being he had ever looked upon.

"Pardon my intrusion upon a bachelor's sanctum, Colonel Castleton, but I came to ask you a few questions; in fact, as newspaper men say—to interview you."

"I am wholly at madam's service," was the polite reply.

"You were second to Mr. Basil Trevor in his duel with Ellis Linwood, a few days ago?"

The colonel, in spite of his nerve, gave a slight start; but the smile never left his face, and he answered:

"I had that honor; but, I hope Madam Burton has not to mourn a friend in Mr. Trevor?"

"Yes, Mr. Trevor was my friend."

"I am so sorry; madam has my deepest sympathy."

"As he was my friend I have come to hear from your lips an account of the affair, from beginning to end."

"With pleasure, though we have kept the cause out of the papers. It was an insult from Mr. Linwood to Trevor at the gambling-table, and resented by a blow it brought a challenge."

"I acted for Mr. Trevor and carried him to the field in my yacht."

"And he had perfect confidence in you, as his second?"

The question struck home, and the colonel's face changed color, but he replied:

"Why should he not have?"

"It has been said that he doubted there being a ball in the pistol when you first handed it to him."

"Yes, he fired at a bird near and killed it; but I believe he did that to break down Linwood's nerve, and who was a dead shot."

"And he could have killed Mr. Linwood had he so wished?"

"Undoubtedly; but, to what do these questions tend, madam?"

"As you said you were so wholly at my service, of course you will pardon me if I continue."

The colonel bowed, but it was evident that those splendid, searching eyes, looking upon his face, were making him decidedly uneasy.

"Mr. Trevor accompanied you to sea, I believe?"

"Yes, I deemed it best to land him in Connecticut, or Rhode Island, should Linwood die."

"Ah! your forethought was most kind."

The colonel did not know how to take this remark and merely bowed, while Helen continued:

"Will you tell me how you came to lose him overboard?"

"A clear case of suicide, I think, as he seemed very gloomy after the duel."

"Was there any one on your yacht unfriendly to him?"

"There were only myself and crew on board, madam."

"And neither had cause to wish Mr. Trevor out of the way?"

"Pardon me, madam, but you are questioning me in a manner I do not like, and unless you give me a motive I must decline answering," and though the colonel spoke with the utmost politeness in tone, it was evident that he was considerably annoyed, and had Helen been a different woman from what she was, the interview would have terminated long before.

"My motive is to ascertain whether Mr. Trevor came to his death by accident, suicide, or design—if the latter, my motive will be to discover his murderer."

"I have given you my opinion, madam; can I say or do more?"

"I thank you, sir, and pardon the worry I have given you," and Helen arose to take her departure.

"One moment, please, madam; may I ask who sent you to me to make these inquiries?"

For an instant Helen made no reply, and then she said, simply:

"Zaidah, the Red Witch."

"That woman!"

But, Helen had gone, and Colonel Brete Castleton was alone with his thoughts, which were certainly not of a pleasant nature, for he grumbled forth:

"I have met her at last, and—curse her! I do not like her, for she is a perfect devil, and I must look out, for she means mischief," and smoothing the frown from his brow the elegant colonel went out for a walk.

In the meantime Helen returned to her home and dismissed her carriage until after dinner, when, shortly after dark, she again entered it and drove away, this time to the residence of lawyer Livingstone, who seemed very much flurried by her coming.

"I called to ask if you had received any tidings of my little *protege*, Florette?"

"None at all, my dear Mrs. Burton, though I have had detectives daily at work; and you have heard no news?"

"Nothing; inform me the moment you hear," and Helen drove away, leaving the lawyer standing bare-headed at the curbstone, for he had gone out to her carriage, and muttering:

"Is that woman playing me sharp, or not? One never knows exactly how to take a woman; but I must go up to see Linwood," and calling a servant to bring him his hat he made the visit, and came upon the scene already described to the reader.

Leaving the fashionable part of the city, Helen drove down into the streets where dwelt the poorer classes, and the stylish turnout soon

drew up at the door of Florette's former home, greatly to the wonder of the people in the humble street.

Jicksey heard the excitement caused by the arrival, and recognizing the carriage approached the door, bowing politely:

"Good-evening, missus; has yer found Florette?"

"No, Jicksey; I came to ask you if you had made any discovery?"

"Not much, missus, and yet I seen a letter directed to Miss Florette Brandt, up at the station near where ther boss has his country home."

"A letter addressed to her there, and by whom?"

"It was in the gov'nor's fist, missus."

"Ah! he is then playing some game upon me; yet, why should he? But, I will know, and Jicksey, help me to find out. Here, take this money, and go up there to-morrow, for you can in some way find out if Florette is there; help me in this and you will make far more money than in serving old Livingstone."

"I'll sarve you and Florette 'thout pay, missus, and I'll go to-morrow, for I isn't well and mout be worse in ther morning, mightn't I?"

Helen smiled at the shrewdness of the youth, and again her carriage rolled rapidly through the streets, and half an hour after Ellis Linwood was startled to hear his servant announce a lady visitor.

He had not fully recovered his equanimity after his scene with lawyer Livingstone, and said anxiously:

"A lady to see me?"

"Yes, sir, and she's a beauty!"

"Who is she?"

"She's the lady they call 'The Princess,' sir; I don't know her name."

"Ah! show *that* lady in at once," and Ellis Linwood endeavored to look pale and interesting, while he settled himself back comfortably and gracefully in his chair, muttering: "It's a good thing the governor is sick and does not know what is going on; she received my letter then, and answers it in person, after I had given up all hope. Ah, Linwood, my boy, you are a sly dog with the girls, and it was a bold stroke, your writing to The Princess, asking if you might call," and the young *roué* chuckled with delight at his power over women.

Half-rising he greeted Helen as she swept into the room with the grace and step of an empress, and he said in the pleasant way he so well knew how to assume:

"May a poor wounded devil beg pardon for asking you in here? but it was kind of you to call."

"It is of your wound that I would speak, Mr. Linwood, or rather—"

"How good of you to think of me in my suffering."

"Mr. Linwood, I see that you misunderstand my visit to you, so let me at once tell you that I received your insulting note and consigned it to the flames; had I a male protector, I would ask him to cane you for the impertinence."

"Surely there is some mistake," gasped Ellis Linwood, trembling in fear of another scene.

"There is, sir: you simply mistake me."

"Then why did you come here?" he asked, almost impudently.

"To ask you in regard to your duel with Basil Trevor, whom I almost regret, now that I know you, gave you your life, when he could so easily have taken it."

Ellis Linwood winced as though in pain, and seeing that she had hit him in a vulnerable spot, Helen went on:

"I wish to ask one question of you, and that is, was Colonel Castleton a friend of Basil Trevor?"

"He appeared to be, and he acted as his second."

"Do you know of any motive why the colonel would wish Mr. Trevor out of the way?"

"I do not; why do you ask?"

"Because I look upon the death of Basil Trevor as a most mysterious affair. Even to the duel I may say."

"You don't mean—"

"I mean that you had better not send me any more letters, sir; good-evening, Mr. Linwood," and Helen glided from the room, leaving Ellis Linwood speechless with amazement at her strange visit.

"Another night like this will kill me outright," he groaned, and he yelled for his servant in a tone that brought that worthy with marked promptness.

"Put me to bed, and if any one else calls to see me to-night say that I am dead and buried."

CHAPTER XXXI.

JICKSEY'S DAY OFF.

TRUE to his determination to go upon the

hunt for Florette, Jicksey, at an early hour, arose and had a hearty breakfast, with the air of one who ate because there was important work ahead.

Dressing himself in his best he sat down to a table and wrote the following excuse to lawyer Livingstone, for his non-appearance at the office that day:

"LAWYER LIVINGSTON:

"Boss: I is sick abed this mornin' with cramp colicks owin' to eatin' too much, so I can't come round to work ter-day as I can't sit up."

"Yours trooly,

JICKSEY."

Having folded up this very transparent lie, his first attempt at letter-writing, but not allying by any means, Jicksey engaged the services of Baldy, the Bulldog, to carry it to its destination, and having ascertained how he could reach the home of the lawyer he set out for the depôt, but by the way of the Belt Line of cars, which carried him by the shipping, for the youth was a perfect "wharf rat" and never allowed an opportunity to go by to visit the vessels at the dock.

Having thus led himself into temptation, Jicksey determined to advance upon the place by water, as he caught sight of a sign reading:

"BOATS TO LET."

It did not take him an instant to reach the dock, around which were moored a score of gayly-painted row-boats, with a little yacht anchored here and there in their midst.

"I wants a boat, mister," he said to the man in charge.

"What for?"

"Why, to row, you greeny; you don't think I wants to eat it, does yer?"

"Can you row?"

"Row yer grandmo! In course I kin! What does yer take me fer?"

"A cheeky youngster that will get hurt if he keeps on," retorted the man, angrily.

"Oh, I is cheeky! I has a brass cheek, I has, but I guesses I hain't goin' ter git hurted; but I wants a boat for a row, no towboat, or canal cruiser, but a fust-class gentleman's clipper, as I kin spin along lively, with a gal in the stern, for I has a piece o' calico up ther river a bit."

"Two dollars a day, I charge."

"All right; here's yer duckits. Now send me off in fine style," and having paid his money Jicksey descended the stairs and was soon seated in a light, two-oared row-boat, that he sent flying along up-stream, for he was certainly a fine oarsman.

Settling down to a strong, steady stroke, and with the tide in his favor, Jicksey swept along rapidly past the upper streets of the city, and the beautiful homes of the wealthy, admiring them to his heart's content.

After awhile he rested on his oars and glanced fixedly up at an overhanging cliff, while he gave vent to the following soliloquy:

"Waal, ef thet hain't a happy family up thar, I'm a liar from Liarsville; all they needs is a Chinese an' a Injun to make a *menagery*, 'kase ther's a dog, a cat, a monkey, a parrot, a snake, a ole nigger hen an' ther devil hisself; an' jist look at thet red lady! I guesses I won't settle on this heur stream— Oh hokey! jist hear thet wolf-dog howl! I'm off, Towser; don't mind me, for I hasn't no desire to come ashore, and don't you forget it. Good-by, tom-cats, snakes and all, for I is a-travelin' further up ther river."

So saying Jicksey gave the home of the Red Witch a wider berth, and pulled rapidly away, his eyes still fixed upon the fascinating group upon the cliff.

A couple of miles further and he stopped pulling and looked around upon the course ahead.

"It's a good thing I stopped, or I'd 'a' sunk thet craft," he said, as he saw a vessel lying right in his course, and not fifteen paces from him.

It was a large sloop-yacht, lying at anchor, and, as the tide had turned, the stern was downstream.

Finding that he was drifting back, he was about to resume his oars and pull around the yacht, when a sunny-haired head and smiling face suddenly appeared out of the companion-way, and a sweet voice called out:

"Why, Jicksey!"

"Florette, it's you, or I is blind."

"Yes, and have you come to see me?"

A couple of strong pulls drew his boat under the yacht's stern, when Jicksey quickly made fast, and said, earnestly:

"Florette, I is as glad to see you as if I had the measles, for I was a-lookin' for you."

"Looking for me, Jicksey?"

"It's a wholesome fact; the missus sent me after you, for she's been crazy ever since you left."

"I'll not go back to her, Jicksey, because she is not my friend, or my brother's; only playing a part to keep me in her power."

"Florette, you don't mean it?"

"I do, Jicksey, for I had full proof of it."

"Then you ran away from her?"

"Yes, I did, and, oh, Jicksey, I have had such a time, for lawyer Livingstone took me to his home, and then sent me up to his nice country-place, with such a nice lady for governess, intending to have me educated, and—"

"Florette, thet ole boss o' mine is a sharper; an' he has some game to play, too, ag'in' you, so don't you trust him, for I has ears, an' I has heerd him talk with a gentleman 'bout you."

"Oh, Jicksey!"

"It's truth; don't you stay with him."

"I am not with him, for I was stolen from his home at night, and who do you think by? You can't guess."

"Guess I kin; that old Italian devil, Pietro."

"Yes; but don't speak against Pietro now, Jicksey, for he's dead."

"Dead! I don't believe it; he can't die; he's too bad."

"Yes, Jicksey, he stole me away, and killed Mr. Livingstone's fine dog, and was carrying me back to New York, for he struck me, Jicksey, and hurt me; but this yacht ran over us, and Pietro was drowned, and Mr. Prince jumped into the river and saved me."

"Glad you was picked up, Florette, but don't believe Pietro was drowned, for he's born to be hung, so he'll turn up; but, is this the yacht of that young high-flyer, Burton Prince?"

"Yes, Jicksey, and he saved my life, and says he will have poor brother Carl pardoned, and will educate me—"

"Words is cheap, but there's a premium on doings, Florette; guess he'll be good enough to marry you, too."

"Oh, Jicksey, don't talk that way; he is so good to me."

"Yes, a cat amuses a mouse afore it kills it; but, I tell yer, Florette, thet man are a-playin' a game ag'in' yer, too, so, my advice is for yer to shake 'em all, and go back with me to ther boardin'-house; they is poor, thar, but they loves yer, an' we'll gi'n yer a welcome as will blister yer heart."

"Jicksey, I am not happy here; I was happier at the boarding-house than anywhere else, for I felt I was making some money for brother Carl when he comes out; I would like to go with you, but there are three men on board, and they are lying asleep under the forward awning."

"Then I'll come to-night for you; will you go then?"

"Yes; but the men may discover us and attack you, Jicksey."

"Guess not; now I'll clear out, but I'll be on hand to-night, for my name's Jicksey," and the gallant youth let his boat drop back with the tide, while he sat in a brown study, evidently planning some scheme for the rescue of Florette.

At length his face brightened, and he pulled rapidly back toward New York.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DEEP PLOT AND A CLEVER RUSE.

WHEN Florette discovered who it was that had rescued her from death, she almost wished she had drowned, so great was her dislike for all who bore the name of Prince, for she looked upon the banker and his family as being the whole cause of Carl's imprisonment.

But when Burton Prince, in his smooth-tongued arguments, proved to the young girl that he had done all he could to save Carl, and that it was his intention to have him pardoned out in a short while, Florette, in the goodness of her heart, forgave him all, especially as he had so nobly risked his life to save hers.

Continuing his arguments, Burton Prince urged that the little maiden should remain under his care until her brother got out of prison, and she consented to remain on board the yacht until he looked up a suitable boarding-school to which he intended sending her.

Having gained her promise to wait on board until she heard from him, he anchored some distance above the city and took his departure, but at the same time gave his sailing-master orders not to let her go ashore or communicate with any one.

He had hardly gone before Florette regretted her promise; but then he had seemed so kind and sincere, and she had been so knocked about from pillar to post that she determined to at least remain under Burton's charge until she found out whether he was true or false.

And in the midst of her determination appeared Jicksey upon the scene, with his stories about Burton Prince, his doubts of lawyer Liv-

ingstone, and remembering her experience with Pietro, the Italian, and her letter regarding the motives of Helen Burton for taking her, Florette was glad indeed to give up every other plan and adopt the suggestions of the street Arab who had ever been her friend.

"Yes, I will go back once more to my little boarding-house," she murmured, after Jicksey rowed away, and seating herself in the cockpit she watched a coming boat, with two oarsmen and a person in the stern.

"It is Mr. Prince," she said, as the boat headed for the yacht, and drew near enough for her to recognize the person in the stern-sheets.

"Well, my little ward, how are you to-day?" and Burton Prince sprung on board and extended his hand, which Florette took, while she answered:

"Oh, quite well, sir, thank you; only anxious to be settled."

"And you shall be soon, for it is about that I have come, as I have arranged with Madame De Roux to have you attend her boarding-school, as it is the most fashionable and the best in the city."

"Thank you, sir," said Florette, quietly.

"And when you are settled there I will at once take steps to have the Governor pardon Carl, and can secure him a situation under Government, for I have considerable influence with the Secretary of the Treasury at Washington."

"Thank you, sir," again came the quiet answer, and after a pause Burton Prince continued:

"To-morrow the yacht will drop down opposite Twenty-third street, and I will come down and take you with me to a *modiste* who will provide your wardrobe complete; but there is one thing I wish particularly to speak to you about, and that is that, as you seem to doubt my good intentions, I will prove my truth by asking you to become my wife."

"What! I marry you?" and Florette's large blue eyes dilated with intense astonishment.

"Why not, my dear? I am devotedly attached to you, and could teach you to love me; but, now I would only have you go through the ceremony with me, after which you could go to school for two years, when you would be sixteen, and then I would claim you as my wife before the world."

"No, no! I do not know what it is to love, Mr. Prince, and I cannot consent to bind myself to you in that way, for I will believe you sincere without; besides, I am but a child, a poor little girl, and should not think of marrying one so rich as you are."

"If you will consent, Florette, I will bring you your brother's pardon within the week."

"No, no, I cannot!"

"Think; it will gain his freedom, and, as I said, you need only go through with the ceremony, and then at once leave for school for two years."

"No, brother Carl would not have me sacrifice myself to gain his freedom."

"Is it then such a sacrifice to become my wife? Why, I could marry any belle in New York society to-day, did I wish."

"I know it, and could I have saved my brother from prison, I would have sacrificed my life, but not now, not now."

Burton Prince looked vexed; there was evidently some strong motive for wishing to unite to him in marriage this mere child; but he could not tempt her to consent, and felt that urging her did no good, so said:

"Well, Florette, you know best; but make me one promise."

"What is it?"

"That you will not engage yourself to any one without my consent; for you know I am your guardian, now," he added, with a smile.

"Oh, I never think of beaux, and will make that promise, sir," she said, indifferently.

"Thank you, and remember that I have offered to make you my wife, for I love you, Florette, child though you be, and when you finish your school-days, I will repeat my offer, so try hard to love me," and after giving a few orders to his sailing-master, and promising to come after Florette the next day, Burton Prince took his departure in his boat, and just at sunset reached the dock where Jicksey had rented his boat.

As he landed, he saw a motley set shove off in a large row-boat, but, with one glance at them, he passed on, little knowing that their destination was his own yacht, their purpose to take Florette from his power.

With amused faces, a few idlers stood on the dock, gazing at the boat and its occupants, and indeed they were a mirth-provoking set, for Jicksey, as captain, held the tiller, Tip, the newsboy, and Professor Romeo held oars aft,

and Baldy, the Bulldog, and Milky Jim, a coal-black negro, were bow-oarsmen.

"What do you call that crew?" asked a bystander on the dock.

"They are the Harvards and Yales, consolidated," cried an urchin of twelve, who seemed to be well posted on boating matters.

"You is a liar; we is ther Florette Brandt boarding-house crew, out on a moonlight water excursion," called out Jicksey, and giving the order to shove off, the boat moved slowly away up the river.

It was dark before they passed the cabin of the Red Witch, and Jicksey, remembering the occupants, gave it a wide berth; but, to all ears came the mournful howling of the large dog, and the parrot yelled, lustily:

"Murder! murder! murder!"

This rather shook the courage of the rescue crew, and Milky Jim suggested an immediate return to the brightly illuminated city, adding:

"I hain't no country nigger; I likes towns, I does."

Arriving in sight of the yacht, Jicksey called out to cease rowing, and drawing out a large bundle from under the stern seat, he said:

"Professor, here's ther clothes for you and Baldy; put 'em on now, and here's ther dock-mint that'll do ther biz, and it's fust-class, for I writ it myself, and pasted on it the seal o' ther boss, until it looks like a order for a hangin'."

In a few moments the Professor and Baldy were rigged out in second-hand suits of police uniform, shields, clubs, hats and all, and the former carried in his pocket a forged order for the arrest of Florette Brandt, who was to be taken at once before the nearest City Justice.

"Boat ahoy!" sang out a seaman on the yacht, as the boat approached.

"Sing out to him, Professor," said Jicksey.

"We are officers of the law, and have orders to board your vessel," called out the Professor, and Jicksey steered the boat under the yacht's stern, and the two supposed policemen sprung on board.

"Is there a young girl on board this craft by the name of Florette Brandt?" asked the Professor, pompously.

"Yes, sir; she is under the charge of my employer, Mr. Burton Prince," answered the sailing-master.

"I am sorry, sir, but I have an order for her arrest."

"Her arrest? Why, what can she have done?" demanded the sailor, in surprise.

"That is to be seen, sir; in the name of the law, whose majesty I trust you will in no way resist, I command you to produce the body of the said Florette Brandt, spinster."

This was too much for the sailing-master, and seeing the paper, with its red seals, in the Professor's hands, he quickly called out to Florette to come on deck.

The young girl instantly obeyed, and at a glance recognized her old boarders disguised as policemen, yet showed no sign of recognition, as she said:

"I overheard you, sir; if I am arrested, I must go."

"I am sorry, miss; but the law compels its officers to do their duty. Are you ready?"

"Yes," and five minutes after the boat was on its way back to the city, and within two hours Florette was once more mistress of her old home, while all hands, even to Mrs. O'Gorman, were dancing a jubilee in welcome.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NOT DEAD.

LAWYER LIVINGSTONE sat alone in his private office, and his brow was troubled, for he had not been able to discover aught of Florette, who had been so mysteriously stolen some time before from his country home.

In the front office sat Jicksey, an innocent expression upon his face, but a quiet twinkle of contentment in his black eyes, for he was happy, now that Florette was once more discharging the functions of "boarding-house missus" at the old home, and complacently listened each day to lawyer Livingstone's offer of one thousand dollars for the discovery of the missing girl.

"Well, old Macaroni, what do you want? I was in hopes you was dead," said Jicksey, as he looked up and saw the evil face of Pietro, the Italian, peering in at the door, and looking pale and haggard.

With Florette Jicksey had believed the Italian drowned on the night of the adventure on the river, and it was a surprise to see him there; but the young aspirant for legal lore was not one to exhibit surprise at anything.

"Me a-wanta see lawyer Livingstone."

"And I guesses he wants to see you; if he

don't the hangman does," was Jicksey's not very complimentary rejoinder.

The Italian scowled and dropped his hand upon the knife in his bosom, as was habitual with him when angered.

"Oh, you needn't kill me, old Macaroni, for you've done enough already to string yer up; but I'll tell the boss ther Diabolo Diablistimo, as we say in Italian, is desirous o' seein' him," and Jicksey made known to the lawyer who was outside.

"Pietro? Ah! Show him in at once."

"Skip in, Macaroni; but I guesses it won't be long afore you is fired out, for he told me he was goin' ter give yer ther grand bounce."

With a muttered curse at the youth the Italian entered the private office.

"Well, Pietro, you have come to tell me about the girl, and get your reward, I suppose?"

"No, cursa the girl; she giva me mucha trouble," and seeming to feel that the lawyer knew that he had stolen Florette away, with ready wit he determined to bring falsehood to his aid, and tell him that he had kidnapped the young girl, and was bringing her to the city to give up to him, pretending that he did not know that it was the lawyer's own home, and himself, that he had taken her from.

"Why, you egregious fool, that was *my* home you took her from, for I had found her some time before and sent her there."

Pietro feigned surprise well, and then entered upon a torrent of profanity against the dog that had bitten him, and Burton Prince, whose yacht had run him down.

"What! he ran you down, and then saved her? After all she is in his power?" exclaimed the lawyer.

"I tella you true, signor; he nearla drowna me; but I swim good and get 'shore; but I sick for some time, and sick now."

"Yes, you don't seem to be in the best health or spirits; but where is the girl now?"

"He hava her; but I will geta for you, if you paya me monna."

"Perhaps it would be more economical for me to get her myself."

"Me hava a secret; he killa man."

"What! Burton Prince killed a man?"

"Yes; you giva mucha monna for secret?"

"Yes, I will pay you well, for I can clip his wings and get the girl and her— Never mind what, Pietro; but go on and tell me."

"Where monna?"

"How much?" laconically asked the lawyer.

"Two thousand dollar."

"You are 'way up, my honest fellow; come down a thousand."

"No! Hava good secret; man killa—beautiful lady with him—me tella her name—Helen."

"Ah!" and lawyer Livingstone was upon his feet in an instant. "You can tell a secret of murder that will inculpate Burton Prince and Helen Burton?"

"Yes."

"Then make it known to me and I will give you a check for two thousand dollars."

"No wanta check; maka bad for me at banka."

"You are right; then I will give you the money, for I will send to the bank for it."

"Me tella you," and in his broken English Pietro went on to tell his story, and the eyes of the lawyer opened with astonishment and twinkled with delight.

"Now, Pietro, you must go to police headquarters and make your charge; refer to me in the matter, and Burton Prince will be arrested, and you and the woman must appear against him; it will be a bombshell in high life, but it will give me an opportunity to be the friend of Helen Burton in the matter, and with this young man hanged for murder, or sent for life to the penitentiary, I can get full charge of— Never mind, Pietro, you are too good a listener, and twice have nearly caught, with your quick ears, a little secret I have."

"Now here is your money, so go and make your charge against Burton Prince," and lawyer Livingstone rubbed his hands in glee, for it was a happiness for him to be able to bring the young banker down from his high position in society.

Going home early, that day, lawyer Livingstone awaited anxiously the coming out of the afternoon's paper, and securing one he rushed up to his daughter's room, crying:

"Bella, my child, listen to this! Here is a bombshell in high life, that will drag down some proud heads," and he read aloud as follows:

"A STARTLING DISCOVERY!"

"ONE OF OUR MOST PROMINENT CITIZENS ACCUSED
OF MURDER!"

"BURTON PRINCE IN THE TOMBS!"

"AN ITALIAN'S ACCUSATION!"

"Guilty, or Not Guilty?"

"A WOMAN IN THE CASE!"

"The community will be shocked to learn that Mr. Burton Prince, the well-known banker, was arrested at his office to-day upon a charge of murder, brought against him by an Italian, who swears that he saw him commit the deed."

"The Italian, whose name is Pietro Avilla, says that he was traveling on foot through Connecticut some year or more ago, and stopped to rest beneath the shade of a cedar thicket, upon the banks of the Housatonic river."

"Dropping off to sleep he was awakened by voices, and discovered two persons quarreling, one of these being Mr. Burton Prince, and the other a lady known as Mrs. Helen Burton, but famous here as The Princess, on account of her wondrous beauty and royal style."

"The cause of the quarrel, Pietro says, was jealousy, as near as he could learn, and they parted in anger; but, shortly after, another person appeared upon the scene, for the woman remained where Burton Prince had left her."

"This third person was a discarded lover of the lady's, it seems; and again a quarrel ensued, which was suddenly interrupted by a rifle-shot, and the man staggered back and fell over the precipice into the river below, while Mr. Prince, whom the Italian says fired the shot, ran rapidly away."

"Officers have gone up to the village, near where the scene occurred, to investigate the truth or falsity of the Italian's statement, and until their return both Mr. Prince and Pietro will be held in the Tombs, while Mrs. Helen Burton will also be arrested, it is said."

Having finished reading this garbled statement of the Italian, lawyer Livingstone ordered his carriage and drove to the home of Helen Burton, in the hall of whose home he found a policeman on duty; but Helen met him with a calm face and placed her case in his hands.

But there was something in her face he could not understand, and promising to come again soon, he departed, while she, as she returned to her room, muttered through her set teeth:

"Chance has given me the opportunity I sought to avenge myself upon Burton Prince. So be it; I will let the Italian tell his story, as he threatened here, the other day, when I refused his exorbitant demands for hush-money."

"I'll not say *who* did the deed, and Burton Prince will suffer the penalty, for indirectly he was the cause of poor Edgar Monkton's death."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?

DURING the few weeks that followed the arrest of Burton Prince for murder, New York fashionable life was all agog with excitement, for the young banker lay in the Tombs, with every prospect of being found guilty, and a quiet wedding at the house of lawyer Livingstone had made his lovely daughter Mrs. Ellis Linwood.

The marriage of his son, so soon after his duel and severe wound, and especially his alliance with the daughter of lawyer Livingstone, wholly upset old Mr. Linwood, and he failed rapidly, until three days after the wedding he died, but bitterly he revenged himself upon Ellis, for he cut him off without a dollar, leaving his vast wealth to charitable purposes.

Of course Ellis Linwood swore loudly, and cursed his father's memory, but lawyer Livingstone gave no vent to his profanity, though he mentally called the old man hard names, and registered a mighty oath, if there was law that he would break the will in behalf of his son-in-law, and at once commenced a suit for that purpose.

As for Bella, she was happy in being the wife of the only man she ever loved, and her perfect devotion to him softened the heart of Ellis Linwood, especially as he was now dependent upon his salary at the insurance company, and the dowry of his lovely wife.

While society was excited over this marriage, the trial of Burton Prince was called, and from the very first it looked bad for him.

Of course the court-house was crowded with the elite of the metropolis, and eagerly all listened to the testimony of the witnesses summoned from the Housatonic valley, and learned how poor Edgar Monkton had been missing since the time set by the Italian for the murder, and that the man killed was, according to Pietro's description of him, none other than the unfortunate school-teacher.

Then the story of his love for Helen came out, and of his being discarded by the village beauty, for the handsome and rich young banker, about whom and the maiden there were dark insinuations made.

That Burton Prince always, when wandering through the valley and mountains, carried his

rifle, was also proven, and not one doubted the Italian's story; but, why had he kept the secret so long?

This he answered by saying it was not his business to tell; but when he found the secret preying heavily upon his conscience, he at last made up his mind to make a clean breast of it, and had consulted lawyer Livingstone upon the subject, and was told by him that it was his duty to do so.

And then Helen was called to the stand, and admitted having been once engaged to Edgar Monkton, and breaking with him when she met Burton Prince.

The quarrel she also admitted, the departure of Burton Prince, who left her upon the cliff, and that he had his rifle with him.

She volunteered nothing; looked the prosecuting lawyers firmly in the face, and answered every question in a firm, distinct tone, but said not a word more than she had to.

"And did Edgar Monkton join you after Mr. Prince left?" asked the district-attorney, and every ear was strained for the answer.

"Yes."

Burton Prince now eagerly leaned forward and riveted his eyes upon her face, for he felt that she had brought this charge against him in revenge for his treatment of her, and the reader will remember that he did not know of there having been a death-shot given there.

"Did you have a quarrel with Mr. Monkton?"

"Yes."

"Was there a shot fired while you were with him?"

"Yes."

"Did it take effect?"

"Yes."

"Upon whom?"

"Edgar Monkton!"

A grand sensation in court at this reply caused the judge to call for order.

"Who fired that shot?"

"I did not see the person at the time the shot was fired."

"And it killed Mr. Monkton?"

"Yes."

"He fell at your feet?"

"No; he staggered back and fell over the cliff."

"Where did the bullet strike him?"

"I saw a blood-stain on his forehead."

"Did you see the one who fired, after the fatal shot?"

"Yes."

"Is the prisoner that one?"

"I decline to answer."

Another sensation followed, and every eye was turned upon Helen; but she stood the ordeal bravely, while her broken-hearted mother, who sat near her, sobbed like a child.

With circumlocutory questioning the lawyers tried to draw Helen out to say more, but it was impossible; she would not say that Burton Prince fired the fatal shot, and it was supposed that she pitied him and wished to save him, and for that reason would not charge him with the murder.

After the arguments pro and con, the case was given to the jury, and a verdict was at once returned, when the judge asked:

"What say you, gentlemen of the jury—is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

There was the silence of death in the courtroom and every eye was turned upon the foreman, as he said, in a deep, impressive voice:

"Guilty!"

At heart Burton Prince was a fearless man, and he received the sentence without the tremor of a nerve—that within six weeks he was to be "hanged by the neck until he was dead, dead, dead!"

Hardly had the words left the lips of the judge, when a man entered hastily, and said in a loud, ringing voice:

"Hold! that man is not guilty!"

Every one started, and all eyes were turned upon the speaker, while from scores of lips broke the cry:

"It is Basil Trevor!"

"I am Basil Trevor, a Bohemian artist, supposed to be dead, but arrived in time to show you the crime of hanging a man on circumstantial evidence, for I killed Edgar Monkton!"

Here, indeed, was a sensation, when, in his clear tones, Basil Trevor, as elegant in manner and as handsome as ever, went on to tell how he had accidentally come upon the struggle upon Lover's Leap between Edgar Monkton and Helen Boyd, and had fired just in time to save her from a fearful death.

"Why did you not admit that Burton Prince was not the one who fired the fatal shot, for, by not so doing, it was believed that he was guilty"

my the jury?" demanded the judge sternly of Helen; but Basil Trevor quickly answered:

"Because we both swore not to divulge that secret, and, even though believing me dead, she would not lay the dead against me."

"No," and Helen arose; "I had another motive—*revenge!* That man, Burton Prince, found me a pure, innocent girl; but by a false marriage, which I believed legitimate, he so terribly betrayed my trust in him, that my fond love was turned to bitterest hate, and it has been the one wish of my life that he should stand forth before the world the real scoundrel that he is. I should not have seen him hung, but I would have made him know that he was in the power and wholly at the mercy of the woman he had wronged."

"I did not accuse him of the murder; that base Italian tried to get me to pay him to keep the secret, but I refused, and, in spite, he made the charge. Burton Prince has escaped the gallows, for which I am not sorry, but the end has not yet come."

Like a princess, indeed, did Helen sweep out of the court room, while the friends of Burton Prince pressed around him to offer their congratulations upon his escape, and among the crowd were Colonel Brete Castleton and Mrs. Earl.

But, while congratulations warmly fell upon his ears, an officer of the law stepped forward, and, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the young banker, said, in a loud tone:

"Mr. Prince, in the name of the law, I arrest you."

"In God's name, what have I done, now?" cried the prisoner, almost unnerved.

"The charge against you, sir, is robbery," answered the officer.

"*Robbery!* Hah! who dares make this charge?"

"I do, sir! Officer, do your duty," and a tall, slender man, with beardless face, and dark-blue eyes stepped forward and confronted Burton Prince; but he, nor any one else appeared to recognize the stranger.

"And who are you, sir?" angrily demanded the young banker, while his father, who had been a silent, but deeply interested witness of the whole trial, said, in trembling tones:

"Yes, who are you, sir, that thus accuses my boy?"

"That, sir, Mr. Burton Prince will soon find out to his cost," was the answer of the stranger.

"There is some mistake, Prince, and I will accompany you to the prison and see about it," said Colonel Castleton.

"Yes, there is some mistake," added Mrs. Earl.

"Is your name Castleton—Brete Castleton, sir?" and the officer turned toward the colonel, who haughtily replied:

"It is."

"Then, I have an order for *your* arrest, and yours, too, madam, if you are Mrs. Victoire Earl."

"Hold! You are going too far, officer," cried the colonel, but he turned very pale, as did also Mrs. Earl.

"I know my duty, sir, and you and Mrs. Earl are my prisoners."

"And upon what charge is this arrest, Bolton?" asked old banker Prince.

"*Murder!*"

The answer caused a general outcry, when, from out of the crowd stepped Basil Trevor, who said, aloud:

"Yes, I charge Brete Castleton and Victoire Earl with murder, and I will prove my words."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MARION'S APPEAL.

THE Governor of the great state of New York sat alone in his home in the capital, looking over his private correspondence, when his servant in waiting brought him a card.

"Why, it is the daughter of my old friend Prince, and, as I have seen that her brother is in trouble, she has doubtless come to plead for him. Ah me, the lot of an Executive is a hard one," and having thus mused half aloud he bade the servant show the lady in.

It was Marion Prince, pale, and a little nervous, yet more beautiful than ever.

"Why, Miss Marion, this is indeed an honor, and I welcome you to Albany," said the Governor, politely advancing to meet her.

"Thank you, Governor, and I have come especially to see you, for have you forgotten a wager yet unpaid which you owe me?"

"Ah, had you been in my debt it would never escape my mind; I remember now, you inveigled me into a game of cards, the day I dined

at your father's, and made the stakes a kiss against a promise."

"You suggested the kiss, I believe, which I put against your promise to grant me any request I might ask of you within the year, and I won."

"Yes, I am sorry to say, Miss Marion, that you won."

"Then you wish to retract?"

"Oh, no; I am only sorry I lost my bet; my stakes are subject to your order," assented the Governor, gallantly.

"But I shall ask no ordinary favor: it will be something that will be connected with your official powers."

"Ah! did I refer to such being the stakes?"

"Oh, no; nothing was said of what might be the character of the favor you would grant me, and I have taken advantage of that circumstance to ask you to extend mercy in a certain case."

"If in my power, Miss Marion, I will do so."

"Then I will briefly give you the facts of the case: a young man of good family, his father being a clergyman, upon his term ending at college, found himself cast upon the world, penniless, and with a sister to support, for his parents were dead, and they had been poor."

"At college he met my brother, whom you know, and Burton extended to him a pecuniary favor, and, strange as it may seem, upon his coming to New York he saved my life—"

"Ah, I remember the circumstance; your horses were running away with you."

"Yes, sir, and in checking them he had his arm broken. Refusing the large sum my father, upon finding him poor, offered him, he accepted a position in the bank, and met there the junior partner, an ex-naval officer, whom this young man had served under when a cabin-boy in the navy, and who had saved the boy's life by jumping overboard after him into the sea."

"For some time all went well, and the new clerk was liked and respected by all, until one night my brother left the safe-keys in his keeping, and ten thousand dollars were found gone in the morning."

"I remember: the young man confessed his guilt."

"He confessed his guilt, yes, Governor, but he was not guilty."

"Then he was a fool, Miss Marion," bluntly declared the Governor.

"No; he sacrificed himself for others, for I have sifted the case well. There were but three persons who could have taken the money that night: one, my brother, before he gave up the keys—the junior partner, Mr. Harvey De Vigne, who visited the bank at midnight—and the one I speak of, Carl Brandt."

"But my brother had helped him pecuniarily when in great distress, and Mr. De Vigne had saved his life, and he sacrificed himself to save whichever one of the two he believed to be the guilty one."

"You make a strong case of it, Miss Marion, and a romantic one; but had he any other motive?"

"Not unless this be one, sir; it is anonymous, and I received it some time since," and she handed the Governor a letter, which he opened and read aloud:

"Is Miss Marion Prince too blind to discover, or is she intentionally determined not to see the motive that prompted Carl Brandt to accuse himself of crime?"

"If so, I will offer a suggestion: Carl Brandt knew that Burton Prince robbed the bank, and laid a trap to have him accused of it; but Miss Prince coming in at the time of the discovery of the theft, the man sacrificed himself to save the wicked brother of the woman he loved more than all else in the world."

"This is a remarkable communication, Miss Marion; but let me ask you one question: did you know that this man loved you?"

"I did," answered Marion, and her face became crimson, though she spoke firmly.

"And you—pardon me if I seem curious?"

"Love him in return," was the candid response.

"But he is a convict."

"Yet innocent—a blameless man. Now, that I recall his manner on that day, I feel that he did sacrifice himself to save my poor brother, whose extravagance has driven him to this act, for Burton was ever wild and wayward."

"And you wish this man, Carl Brandt, pardoned?"

"I do, sir."

The Governor reached a bell and told the servant, who appeared, to send his private secretary to him.

"Mr. Pelham," he said, when that personage appeared, "telegraph at once to Sing Sing, and

ask of the character of Carl Brandt, known as Carl, the convict, since he has been in prison, and all other particulars regarding his stay there."

The secretary disappeared, and the Governor, after a long and thoughtful silence, turned again to Marion:

"Your brother is now under heavy bail, and charged with murder."

"He is, sir; but, though there are circumstances that point strongly against him, I do not believe him guilty of murder. He is to be tried on Monday."

"I hope he will prove his innocence in that, as well as in this bank matter."

"Ah, sir, he cannot be accused openly of the latter. I ask the pardon of Carl Brandt, believing him innocent, but the world must not know that my brother is guilty. Yet, if I really knew Burton to be the criminal, I would not shield him, and have Carl Brandt bear the crime."

"You are a noble girl, Miss Marion, and your love for this Mr. Brandt causes me to believe as you do— Ah, here is Pelham—well, sir?"

"The answer is most favorable, sir, in every particular: the man has never had a reproof since coming there—keeps to himself—does his work cheerfully, and the superintendent begs you to show him mercy."

"Thank you, Pelham," and, turning to Marion, he said:

"My dear young lady, I am glad to hear so good a report, and I promise you that upon the day the trial against your brother ends, I will send you a full pardon for Carl Brandt, and I will have paid my wager, lost at cards."

Thanking the Governor, Marion departed with a happy heart; but, bitterly was it wrung during the trial of her brother, that followed, the next week, and she heard from her father the bitter tidings that he had, on circumstantial evidence, been found guilty, yet, saved by the coming of Basil Trevor, had then been sent to prison under the charge of robbery.

"Oh, poor, poor Burton! I would almost rather have him a murderer than a thief, for one may be the act of impulsive anger, while the other can only be deliberate crime, prompted by an evil heart. Oh, father, what is to be done?" and poor Marion wept convulsively, while banker Prince, with stern face and set lips, paced to and fro, muttering:

"I feared trouble for that boy, he was so wild and extravagant; but, I would give my fortune to save his honor."

"A telegram for you, miss," said a servant, entering the library, where banker Prince and Marion sat in grief and bitterness of heart.

Lagerly she opened the envelope and read:

"I have received by telegraph the result of the trial: am glad his innocence was proven on the one charge, and regret exceedingly this second accusation: accept my deepest sympathy."

"The pardon goes to you to-day."

There was no signature, but Marion knew well from whence it came, and her face flushed as she turned toward her father and said:

"I have a confession to make to you, father; but you will forgive me, I know, when I tell you all," and she did tell him of her love for Carl Brandt, and his amazing devotion to her, and how she had visited the Governor in behalf of the poor convict.

When she had finished her father paced to and fro in deep thought, and then said:

"Marion, do you know I am as fully convinced of the innocence of Carl Brandt as you are, for—for—I have found that I could not trust my own son. Thank God, the Governor has pardoned that poor boy, and when he returns here I shall make him cashier in Burton's place."

"Oh, father!"

"I swear it! From the penitentiary to the bank he shall go, let the world say what it will."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

IT was a blustering, stormy night, and few persons dared face the fury of the elements after darkness settled down upon the city.

And yet there was one person who sprang quickly from the train as it rushed into the depot and hurriedly walked down the street, buttoning his coat up around his throat and bending his head to the storm.

As if familiar with the city, he wandered his way along on foot, unmindful of the horse-cars that passed him, and, from his general appearance, not being rich enough to ride.

That man was Carl Brandt, no longer Carl, the convict, and a few hours before he had been given his pardon, a railroad ticket to New York

and a piece of advice from the superintendent.

He had taken all three kindly, bade farewell to the gloomy walls of Sing Sing, and once more he found himself in the great metropolis, so full of sinners unpunished and of innocent persons accused of guilt; so full of crime rioting under the shadow of the churches, and of masks of virtue that hide deformed hearts.

Remembering where Florette had told him that she lived and kept boarders, Carl Brandt wended his way thither, and, reaching the unpretentious dwelling, he paused in the doorway and listened, for there came to him the soft music of harp-strings, and above them a sweet voice that he knew well.

It was after supper in the "Florette Ranch," as Jicksey called her home, and, being a stormy night, the boarders had lingered indoors, while Florette, as was her custom, was singing for them upon a harp which they had clubbed together and bought for her, even Mr. O'Gorman sacrificing the pleasure of his week's spree to give his allowance.

A moment the trembling, drenched man without stood looking through the half-open door, his handsome, intelligent face very pale and wan, and his dark eyes drinking in the scene.

At last, choking back his emotion, he stepped to the door and threw it open, appearing there like a full-length picture in a frame.

One glance, and, with a shriek of joy, Florette tottered forward and fell in his arms, for she was overcome with emotion: and thus brother and sister stood, united once more.

But the boarders were on the *qui vive*, and, at once suspecting that Carl had escaped, they determined to protect him against all odds. Baldy, the Bulldog, sprung to the door, shouting, in a loud whisper:

"Give yer sis a greetin', Carl, an' I'll guard ther door and break ther head o' ther first cop as puts his mug in here."

"That's so, we'll fire 'em out the window, you bet!" cried Jicksey, seizing a poker, while Zip, the Professor and Milky Jim also stood on the defensive.

"No, no, my friends, there is no need for your protection, for I have been pardoned," said Carl, in a trembling voice, and with a yell they rushed forward to grasp his hand in congratulation, though Baldy and Jicksey were a little disappointed to have the romance of an escape upset by the reality of a pardon.

"And this is your home, little sister?" said Carl after awhile.

"It are thet, an' we'll jist skip outside an' give yer ther benefit of it, seein' as yer is company," announced Jicksey, with considerable thoughtfulness.

"Yes, we'll see yer at breakfast," said Baldy, and shaking hands with Florette and Carl, the boarders, diamonds in the rough, departed, and the brother and sister, so long parted, were left alone.

And, talking over their sorrows and joys, we will leave them, dear reader, for upon that scene even the pen of the narrator should not intrude.

The sun arose bright and beautiful, chasing away the clouds of storm of the night, and while Florette prepared her breakfast Carl and the "boarders" sat around talking.

"And yer say yer don't know why yer was pardinged out?" asked Baldy.

"No; it was a surprise to me, I assure you. Ah, Jicksey, let me see your paper," and Carl eagerly stretched forth his hand for the morning *Herald*, which Jicksey had just brought in.

"Hal! what is this? Burton Prince to be tried immediately for robbery," exclaimed Carl.

"Yes, I did not tell you that he had been arrested the very day his trial for murder was over," and Florette gave her brother a hasty outline of the other charge against the young banker.

"But, who is his accuser?"

"No one, other than the authorities, knows, it seems; but he says he will prove him guilty, and the trial will show."

"Yes, the trial will show," remarked Carl, sadly, and he turned to the "Professor" who said:

"Ah, here is a Personal for you."

"For me? a Personal?"

"Even so; read for yourself," and the Professor handed him the outside sheet of the *Herald*, adding: "I always read the Personals, expecting one of these days some one will advertise for me to come and get a fortune left me."

Carl Brandt took the paper and read aloud, with a puzzled look upon his face:

"If Carl Brandt will call at the Prince mansion on

Madison avenue, he will learn of something to his advantage."

Carl turned red and pale by turns, after reading this, and, unheeding Florette's earnest, "Don't go, brother Carl," he said:

"Little sister, if you will let me have some breakfast, I will go up and see what this means."

Half an hour after, dressed in one of his best suits, which Florette had carefully kept for him safely packed away, and with a five-dollar note which she had forced into his pocket, the pardoned convict wended his way to the palatial home of banker Prince.

The banker had gone down to the office; Miss Prince was, however, at home, said the servant, and Carl's voice trembled as he asked to see her.

"Your card, please, sir."

"I have no card; please tell her that Carl Brandt begs an interview."

He was ushered into the parlors, and soon after came the rustling of silk, and in a stylish morning-robe Marion came into the room.

"Miss Prince, a Personal in this morning's *Herald* caused me—"

He paused, for she had walked directly up to him and taken his hand, while she looked straight into his face and said:

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Brandt; but I have one question to ask you, and I shall expect a truthful answer—hear me; I say a truthful answer."

He looked down and remained silent, while he was very pale, and his hand trembled in hers, though his face was calm.

"Are you, or are you not, Carl Brandt, guilty of the crime of which you were accused, and for which you were sent to prison as a felon?"

He looked her straight in the face now, and answered firmly:

"As I was punished for the deed, and it is past now, I will tell you the truth: *I was not guilty.*"

"Thank God! *I believe you,*" and with the impulsiveness of her nature she buried her head upon his broad breast and burst into tears.

"One more question," she said at last; "do you know who *was* guilty?"

"I do; but I will not betray that secret."

"So be it; I know; now tell me *why* you sacrificed yourself?"

He was silent, and in an earnest way she went on:

"You will tell me, Carl Brandt, when I say to you that *you* suffered for my brother's crime."

He started visibly, yet said nothing, and she continued:

"Yes, Burton Prince, not Carl Brandt, was the criminal; now tell me why you became a convict in *his* stead?"

"Because I loved *you*, Marion, more than I did myself."

The words were wrung from his lips, and they told her that he still loved her, and her heart gave one great bound of joy.

In a few words she then told him that to her he owed his pardon, and that her father also believed him innocent, and wished to see him at the office.

An hour's stay and Carl Brandt left, a happy man; but it was with commingled emotions that he entered the bank, and saw every eye of his former associates turn upon him, and yet not one with an unfriendly glance.

Walking straight to the private office, he there confronted Harvey De Vigne and banker Prince.

He hesitated upon the threshold, and the junior partner stepped forward and said:

"Welcome back, Brandt, and accept my sympathies for your past sufferings, and congratulations upon your pardon."

"I thank you, sir," and Carl turned to greet the banker, who said:

"I, too, welcome you back to the bank, Brandt; but have you seen Marion?"

"I just left her, sir."

"She asked you one question; how did you answer it?"

"I told the truth; I said I was *not* guilty."

"It is as I feared; did you say *who was*?"

"I did not, sir; nor will I."

"You need not; we know, and God forgive me the wrong I did you; but you must come back to us, and enter upon your duties next week, for we have made you cashier."

"What will the world say, sir? an ex-convict a bank cashier?"

"Out on the world! I run my own business, and next Monday you become cashier of this bank, for De Vigne and myself have talked it over."

"From my heart I thank you, gentlemen," and Carl seemed deeply moved.

"Now I will make you out a check for the time since you left us, for we are decided upon it, as we allowed you to wrong yourself, that your salary shall go on—now no words, for we will do as we please," and the old banker forced upon Carl the amount of his salary for the time he had been in prison.

"I do not need this money, sir, for my little sister, Florette, has saved up over a hundred dollars, which I can use."

"That little sister is as proud as Lucifer, Brandt, for though an acknowledged child of the street, after your incarceration, she refused my every offer of aid," said Harvey De Vigne.

"She has had a most eventful time, Mr. De Vigne, but she has been, through all, true to herself, and a pearl beyond price, though, as you remarked, through unfortunate circumstances, a child of the street."

After some further conversation, Carl Brandt took his leave, promising to dine with banker Prince the following day; but though joy came to his heart, and to Florette's, the news that he intended to move up-town once more, and the boarding-house was to be broken up, fell like a death-knell upon the boarders, as the following comments will show:

Milky Jim: "Lordy, I is no good now. No use to try to be good nigger 'ithout Miss Florette to l'arn me."

Jicksey: "You folks may hang 'round ole Mrs. O'Gorman now, fer feed; but I is goin' ter live up-town myself, in a fashionable boardin'-house, as I'se makin' money; but I does hate this givin' up ther Florette Ranch."

Mrs. O'Gorman: "It's meself will be afther bein' missus now, Flowerrit, me darlint, an' I hates it, fer I've enough ter occupy me wid washing clothes and sich; but the loikes o' these will never allow me to tarn 'em out; but, as I s'id before, O'Gorman shell wash ther dishes."

Mr. O'Gorman: "Yis, I'll have to wurruk hard indade, my lassie, whin you hev gone; but good luck to yer, wherever yer go, an' I'll be afther drinkin' yer swate hilt this vera night, begorrah."

The Professor: "I'm sorry that our paths divide here, Florette, for the beautiful world is before you, the bitter past behind me, and the grave waiting for its prey; but I'm only a poor devil, anyhow, and yet I would have you not wholly forget the vagabond Professor."

Zip: "Ef this ranch has bu'sted up, I'll open a news-stand near ther Fifth aveny, and then I'll see yer now and then, Florette, even if yer hain't no longer a little street gal," and Zip turned away to hide a tear that ran across his dirty face, for that enterprising newsboy's face was always soiled, he loving dirt rather than cleanliness.

Nor were Zip's tears the only ones that flowed, for Florette had a strong hold upon the heart-strings of all those drawn around her, and she said, feelingly:

"You've only got me to cry for, while I have you all."

And Carl Brandt threw sunlight upon their hearts, when he said:

"My friends, this is not a final parting, for if Florette does leave this humble home for a better one, you will find there a welcome, I assure you."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"THE STRANGER."

THE excitement caused by the charge of murder against Burton Prince, was, if anything, greater when it became known that he was held for robbery.

The romantic affair of his college days, with Helen Boyd, her wondrous beauty, the scene on the cliff, the Italian's story, the arrest and the trial, with the remarkable reappearance of Basil Trevor, who was believed dead, had woven around the whole life of Burton Prince a thread of romance, to which the mystery of this accusation lent renewed interest.

Having stated the circumstances of his killing Edgar Monkton, to save Helen's life, and she substantiating all that he said, and frankly stating that she had begged him to keep the secret, Basil Trevor had been readily dismissed, it having been agreed upon by the authorities that it was a case of "justifiable homicide."

Returning to his rooms (which Helen, to whom the lawyers in whose hands Basil had left his affairs, had delivered the keys, had never allowed a thing to be disturbed, though she had no idea of his ever appearing again) the young artist gave no explanation of his long and strange absence, merely saying that it would all come out at the trial in England, for thither

were Colonel Castleton and Mrs. Earl to be taken, as the murder, claimed to have been committed by them, was not done in the United States.

But, first, all the interest centered in the trial of Burton Prince, and the morning the case was opened, the court-room was filled to overflowing, and all eyes were turned upon the prisoner, who was looking pale and haggard.

Banker Prince had employed the best legal talent of the land to defend his unfortunateson, against whom the real charges had not been made known, but that they were of a most serious nature was evident.

At last curiosity was satisfied, and a hush fell upon all, when the stranger, who had caused the arrest of Burton Prince, now accused him boldly, upon the night that the safe of the bank of Prince & Co. was opened, of taking the ten thousand dollars himself, and charging the crime upon Carl Brandt, or at least allowing that person to be tried for the offense.

Being called to the witness-stand, this stranger, whose dark, earnest face won the respect of all present, told his story of how, on the night in question, he had entered a faro-bank, and there met Burton Prince, who challenged him, though unknown to him, to a game of cards.

The two had played, the bets running high, and Burton Prince losing, until he bitterly cursed his luck, and said he had only borrowed that money that afternoon, in the hope with it to win back other heavy losses.

"We played until daylight," continued the stranger, "and I won from Mr. Prince ten thousand dollars, and here are the bills, which it will be remembered, at the trial of Carl Brandt, were said to be of a certain package that contained ten one-thousand-dollar notes, new from the Treasury, and the numbers of which a clerk had taken."

"Why Carl Brandt would not produce the stolen money was largely commented upon at the time, and the reason he did not, was because he was not guilty, and I have here the very notes," and he handed them to the judge, and the numbers being compared with those that were stolen, were found to be identical.

The stranger then went on to explain that for certain reasons he had tracked Burton Prince until he could lay his life bare to the public, and having at last caught him in the toils, he had determined to spring the trap, for, not content with having Carl Brandt sacrifice himself to save him, through a sentimental idea, he had one day opened a package, sent there to the bank, and which he, the stranger, had sent.

In this communication, Carl Brandt was told that himself and sister were heirs to an immense fortune, given them by their mother's brother, a wild young man in early life, whom few had expected much good of.

Having opened and read the contents of this package, Burton Prince had written to the lawyers, from whence it came, that Carl Brandt was a felon in prison, but his sister, Florette Brandt, having been left homeless, had been taken by him to care for, and consequently all letters should be addressed to him, regarding her inheritance.

Several communications, said the stranger, had thus passed between Burton Prince and the English lawyers, for the attorney's letters had come from abroad, and the young banker had determined upon a bold game, so at once set out to find this little child of the street, who, unknown to herself, was the heiress of millions.

Through lawyer Livingston the search had been made, and the stranger called upon that astute attorney as a witness, who corroborated his statement that Mr. Prince had sought his services to find the girl, and told him she was an heiress, and that he intended to marry her, so as to get possession of her property.

Jicksey was also summoned, and made known certain scraps of conversation which he had overheard, and which were damaging to Burton Prince, and having thus laid bare the wickedness of the young banker's city life, the stranger went on to make another damaging statement, to the effect that, when at college on the Housatonic, Burton Prince had, to accomplish his designs against Helen Boyd, written to some one of his wicked friends in New York, to send him up a pretended minister to perform a marriage ceremony.

The two, Helen Boyd and Burton Prince, had met this man at Bridgeport and the ceremony was performed; but in this the young deceiver had been himself deceived, as his friend, not as vile as he was, had sent an ordained but poor young clergyman, so that the marriage was legal and incontestable.

This was startling news, and Helen bent her head low and from her lips came a fervent:

"Thank God!"

But, Burton Prince uttered no word; he sat like a statue and seemed thoroughly dazed.

When asked the motive he had for thus playing detective upon Burton Prince, the stranger answered, distinctly:

"Revenge!"

"In what has he wronged you?" asked Burton's lawyer.

"Not so much as I had believed until I heard the statement of Mr. Basil Trevor at the other trial, for, like Pietro, the Italian, I believed that Burton Prince had returned and fired the shot that sent Edgar Monkton over the cliff."

"But, in what has he wronged you?" again asked the lawyer.

The answer came with fearful distinctness:

"I am Edgar Monkton!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

REVELATIONS.

WORDS are inadequate to express the scene that followed the announcement of the stranger that he was Edgar Monkton.

But when he covered his smoothly-shaven face with a long full beard, as he had worn in the long ago, the recognition was complete by Helen, and even Burton Prince dared not deny his identity, while Basil Trevor said:

"As near as I remember, that is the man I fired at."

The cruel scar upon the temple, where the bullet had cut its way, was then shown, and Edgar Monkton went on to tell that his love for Helen had driven him almost mad when he found she was already the wife of his rival, and, in his frenzy, he had seized her in his arms to spring with her over the cliff.

But, miraculously, he had not been killed by the bullet or the terrible fall into the river, the cool water of which had revived him; and, restored to his right senses, he had crept away unseen and hidden himself in an old mine in which he had long worked.

"And in that mine I found my fortune; for therein I found, besides the gold I dug from the earth, an immense treasure-box hidden there a century before by the English, so said a paper I discovered."

"And this fortune is the one upon which I entrapped Burton Prince, for, believing him to be my intended destroyer, I came here to seek revenge against him."

"And more: this fortune is what I intended to share with Carl and Florette Brandt, for their mother, Mary Moore, was my own sister, my name being Edgar Monkton Moore—the wild boy of fifteen years ago, having harvested his wild oats, has hope of some joy in the future."

As though considering further trial a mockery, Burton Prince confessed his guilt in everything, saying that, to recover his losses, he had purposely left the safe unlocked, and given Carl Brandt the keys, after which he had abstracted the money, and lost it playing with the stranger before him.

Sentence was then passed upon him, and he was led away to prison, while Edgar Monkton left the court-room, and, taking a carriage, drove to the home of Florette and Carl, to whom he at once made himself known as their uncle.

Both Carl and his sister remembered having often heard their mother speak of her wild and reckless brother Edgar, who she feared had come to some bad end. They were rejoiced to find the prophecy unfulfilled, and welcomed him to their hearts and home with undisguised joy, and insisted upon his coming at once to live with them.

The story of Edgar Moore, "or The Stranger," as he was called, was the topic of conversation for nine days, and spreading over the Housatonic valley, set the worthy citizens of that beautiful district to digging over the mountains and exploring old ruins in search of precious ores, but with what result is not known, for if discoveries were made they were never reported.

But hardly had the sensational nine days' wonder been talked out, than another arose, for the wild heart of Burton Prince was not one that would brook prison life and dishonor, and yet throb on; and he had stilled its beatings forever, by deliberately ending his own existence, for he was found dead in his cell one morning, and upon his heart was pinned a line to his old father and to Marion, telling them that he had taken poison to end his misery and their shame.

And now I will ask my readers to accompany me across the Atlantic on board of a fine steamer that bore as passengers, but under strict guard, Colonel Brete Castleton and Victoire Earl, and poor Geraldine, the devoted

daughter, who would not leave her mother, guilty though she might be.

As witnesses went Basil Trevor and the Red Witch, for it was said that she had much to say of the past life of the man and woman whom the artist had accused of murder.

But, ere the good steamer reached the shores of old England, a death occurred on board, for, broken-hearted at her shame, and the awful punishment in store for her, if found guilty, Victoire Earl never held her head up after leaving New York, and rapidly faded away, until she sunk into an everlasting sleep, refusing to the last to make any confession that might convict the man she loved, and who had been her companion in crime.

Grim and cold, Brete Castleton looked upon the dead face and form, beautiful in death, and then turned away, a hopeless look in his eyes.

Into the deep waters sunk the hammock-covered body of Victoire Earl, and with its disappearance all joy in life seemed to fade from Geraldine, and three days after found her the inmate of a convent, where, a noble and self-sacrificing Sister of Charity she still lives, with no desire to come back into the beautiful world she went out of, just as she had crossed the threshold of beautiful womanhood.

And Brete Castleton? With iron nerve he stood his trial, listening to every accusation with unflinching eyes, until none doubted that in the long ago, marrying a woman he had not loved, and seeing his elder brother take from him as his wife, the one he idolized, he had, with that brother's wife, who was Victoire Earl, become Cain-accused, a fratricide.

And more: those two guilty ones had, as they believed, also killed the woman whom Brete Castleton had sworn to "love and cherish until death did them part;" but, she had not died under their cruel blows, but lived, brought back to life and health by an African missionary, who had found her, where they had left her, almost dead.

Back to England from Africa, where the deed had been committed, went that guilty pair to get possession of the dead brother's wealth, and tell their tissue of falsehoods, of a wreck and loss of life; but the will of the dead man stared them in the face, for, should his wife survive him, and wish again to marry, she would lose *in toto*, and it would go to their child Geraldine, who was also left a large estate, subject to her mother's control until the daughter married.

Hating his son, a boy then at school in England, Brete Castleton left his native land and sought a home in America, whither his guilty companion, under an assumed name, soon followed him, carrying with her her daughter, and the reader has seen how the man and woman clung together, the tie of crime alone binding them.

But upon their track was an avenger—the woman supposed to be dead; the wife of Brete Castleton, and far and wide she sought them, making ample means for her support by mind-reading disclosures while in a trance and by weird dealings in witchcraft, as the superstitious supposed; and with the negroes and the dumb creatures she had brought with her from Africa, she continued her wandering life of search, until at last she met face to face those two who had so wronged her. Ay, and with them, though unknown to them and unknowing them, her son and Brete Castleton's—Basil Trevor, who had left college, when deserted by his father, to become a wanderer in foreign lands, until Fate at last led him to the great metropolis where his worst enemy, his father, had made his home.

Though, under an assumed name, and grown to manhood, he was unrecognized, Basil Trevor at once knew his father when they met; but with utter contempt for the man who had deserted him, and a suspicion that some crime had taken from him his mother, he preferred not to make himself known.

That he had not been unjust in his doubt of his wicked parent, he proved before the court, when he told how he had been struck a severe blow on the head, and hurled from the yacht into the ocean by the hand of his own father; but, not to die, for he had been only slightly stunned, and, being a good swimmer, had kept up for a long time, when a vessel passed near, and hearing his hail had rescued him from death.

The ship was bound to the West India Islands, and thus it was a long time before he returned to New York, where he arrived to learn of his supposed death, as told him by his mother, the very day before his duel with Ellis Linwood, for, upon obeying a summons from the Red Witch, he had gone there, and she had made

herself known to him, and the history of his father's crimes.

Such were the facts brought out by the trial of Brete Castleton, and an English jury did not hesitate to pronounce him guilty of murder in the first degree, and, three months after, he suffered the full penalty for his crimes upon the gallows, unrepentant and cynical to the last.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

AFTER the penalty of death upon Brete Castleton for his crimes, and the retreat of poor Geraldine to a convent's walls, I will ask the reader to return with me to America once more, and back to the Housatonic valley, where, in the old cottage home near Lover's Leap, Helen Boyd lives in her girlhood home, giving up the brilliant life she could have lived in New York, for the quietude she had known in the olden time, and content, if not happy, in the love of her devoted mother.

One afternoon, as was often her wont, she had gone to Lover's Leap, the old trysting-place, and was standing there, idly dreaming, and looking far down into the waters below, when she started suddenly as she heard a step, and turning quickly, stood face to face with Edgar Moore.

"Helen, do not fear me now, for I have had a bitter lesson in the past; but I have come here to see you, and your mother told me I would find you at this spot, so fraught with memories to both of us.

"She has forgiven me, Helen, and I ask you to forgive and forget, to enter never again that haunted chamber of the past, and to be my wife."

He paused, and she made no reply. After a moment he went on, for he saw that she was deeply moved:

"In the olden time, Helen, I was a poor teacher, when I offered you my love; now I am a rich man, and again I offer it."

"Speak not to me, Edgar, of riches; I know their value, for I used what wealth I found in New York, to cater to my pleasures, and my revenge; I loved you in that olden time, when you were poor, and I love you now; ay, never have I loved other than you, for never, until I returned here, after all that has happened, did I know my own heart."

"Then you will be my wife, Helen?"

"Yes, Edgar."

And one month from that day there was a quiet wedding in that little cottage home, and the guests were from the city, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Brandt, *née* Marion Prince, Mr. and Mrs. Basil Trevor, *née* Berta Ivey, and last but not least in importance, Florette Brandt, who officiates as bridesmaid, with Harvey De Vigne for "best man," and who, if rumor says rightly, is soon to lead to the altar the beautiful girl who leans upon his arm.

But, let me not say *exceunt omnes* from this life-history of more truth than fiction without speaking of some of the other characters—the links that make up the chain which I have welded together.

Lawyer Livingstone has retired from the practice of law, fearing to be yet caught in some of his sly games, and lives upon the interest of his ill-earned wealth, while Ellis Linwood has reformed, and, under the influence of his noble wife, lives an upright life.

Old banker Prince dwells still in his elegant home, with his son-in-law and his daughter, having relinquished his share in the bank to Carl Brandt, whom all delight to honor, even though he once bore the name of Carl, the convict.

In a beautiful home upon the Hudson dwell Basil Trevor, his beautiful wife, who so narrowly escaped becoming Mrs. Burton Prince, and his mother, who still keeps near her the two Africans, though her loathsome pets she has discarded, for she no longer cares to be remembered as Zaidah, the Red Witch.

Living upon the south shore of Long Island, whose hills and vales he delights in roaming over, as she did the old Connecticut hills, is Edgar Moore, and over his pleasant home presides his wife, growing more beautiful than ever, now that children cling around her knees and call her mother.

The poor Professor died a drunkard, I regret to say, and was buried in Potter's Field, and of the fate of Mr. and Mrs. O'Gorman I am ignorant; but Milky Jim, now answering to the name of James, is coachman for Carl Brandt, and Tip, recognized now as "Mr. Terrill," owns a stationery establishment on Nassau street, and bids fair to be a rich man, while Jicksey

gave up the study of the law, and draws a good salary as private detective of the bank of Prince & Co. He is a terror to evil-doers generally, but very popular with his employers, and also with Florette, who, as a pearl beyond price won the heart of Harvey De Vigne, and is no longer a "Child of the Street."

THE END.

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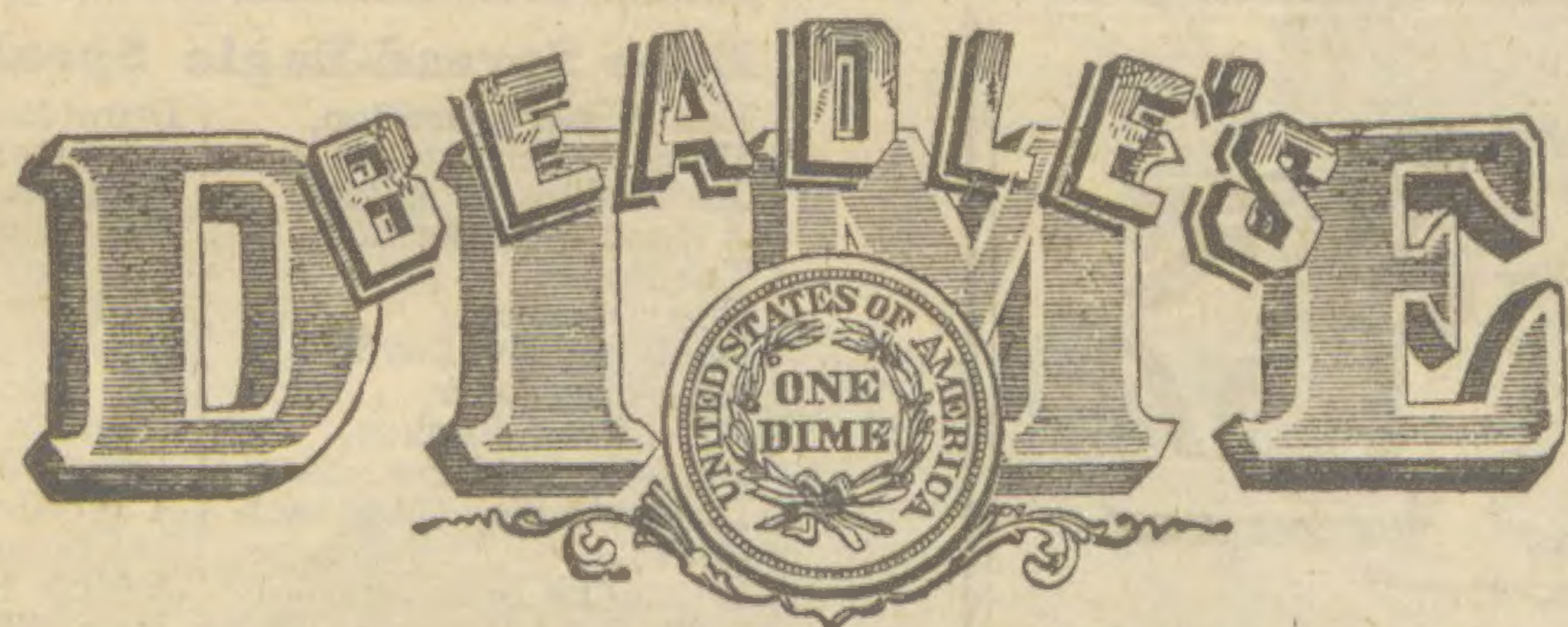
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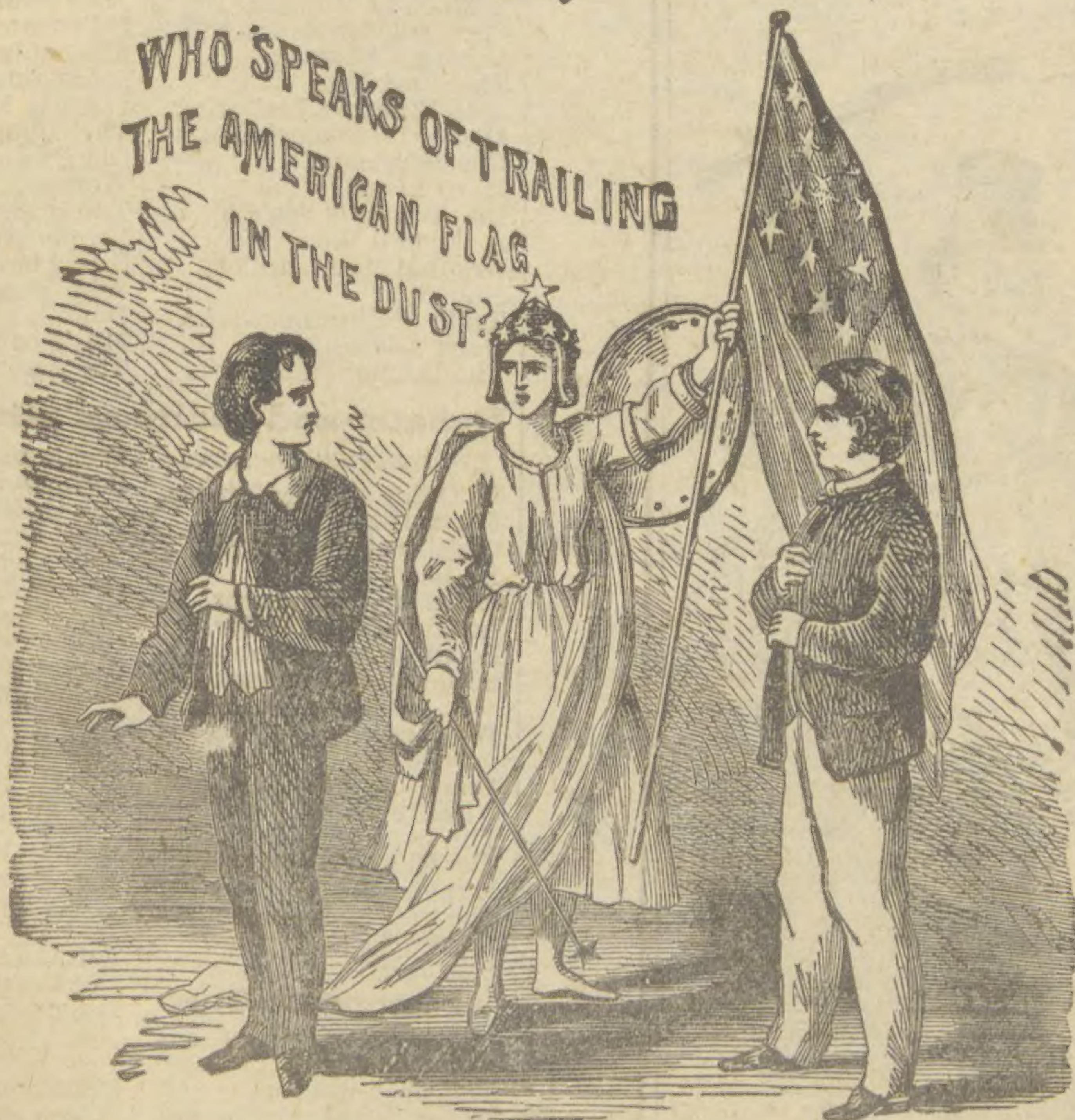
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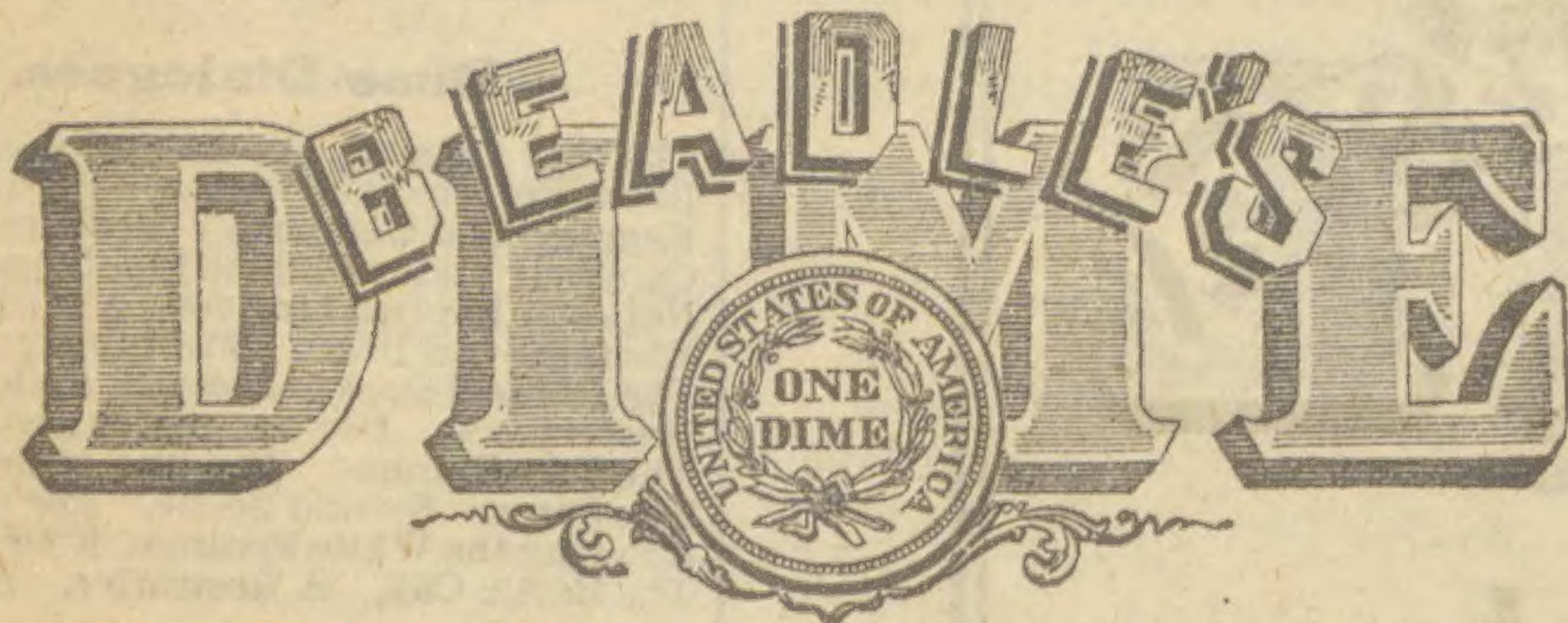
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